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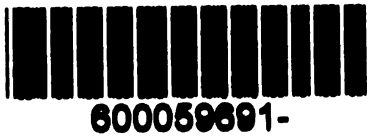
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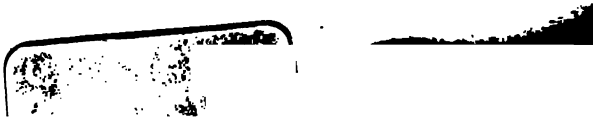
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CASTLE AVON.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "RAVENSCLIFFE,"

&c., &c.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CASTLE AVON.

CHAPTER I.

"A voice was heard in Ramah, Rachel mourning for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not."

Oh, what a fearful night it is! How the wind roars and howls round the house, and what torrents of rain pour down between the blasts! Surely a water-spout must have burst among the hills. The rain falls in flakes, in flashes, in streams of water, rather than descends in drops.

Sometimes she leaves that bedside by which she is sitting, her hand clasped in his, and hastens to a room of which the window over-

looks the front door. She opens the casement, and thrusts her head out, regardless of the driving storm, and vainly striving to pierce the thick darkness of that pitiless night. Vainly, indeed!—a pitchy darkness is round her; she cannot even trace the faintest image of the neighbouring woods; she cannot see the trees close to the house; she cannot even see her hand.

The tempest howls furiously; the casement shakes in her fingers, she with difficulty draws it in. She fastens it, turns yet one glance upon the impenetrable darkness without—one straining, anxious, almost despairing glance, and then returns to watch by the bedside.

The sufferer raises his heavy eyelids as she enters, and one fitful gleam of intelligence is cast upon her from eyes which never met hers but in love; then he murmurs a few words, which she bends her head down with anxious, hungry impatience to understand.

"Is he come?" the sufferer faintly articulates.

"Not yet, not yet; but I expect him every moment."

"A long, weary night. Oh, when will it be morning?"

And the heavy eye-lids closed again. And then another blast rushed by, wilder and louder than ever, and the rain poured against the windows.

And it seemed as if a shrieking might be heard, as of spirits passing over the roof of the many-gabled wilderness of a house, and the wind roared among the old chimneys, and shook at the casements, as if clamouring to come in. The sinking spirits of the dying man, though he was too far gone to listen to the tempest, were evidently shaken and exhausted by this tumult of external nature, and the flame of life just flashing, as in a sinking candle, wasted all the faster because of this.

And the breath came with more difficulty, and the dark shadows began to deepen over his face, and he seemed to sink into a state half slumber, half death, and still she sat by his side.

Sometimes she cast those eyes, so full of passionate love, upwards, imploring the mercy from above to abate this pitiless storm without, to assuage the cruel anguish within. But she prayed without hope, *for he she loved* was

rapidly departing; and still the storm without raged on, and her other treasure—the treasure also so passionately, so desperately loved—where was he?

In that storm? Among those wild woods, or traversing those desolate moors? And in such a night as this?

Then she stole out of the chamber of death again, and went and stood at the top of the stairs, and looked down into the hall, now dimly lighted by a half-expiring lamp.

There was a dark figure standing by one of the pillars below. She spoke in a low, trembling voice, and asked:

"Who is that?"

"Only me, Madam."

"What are you doing there?"

"Only listening and watching."

She came half-way down the stairs to speak to him over the banisters.

"Willmore," in a low, trembling whisper.

"Yes, Madam."

"You are sure Mr. Yates is not come back? He might have come in the stable-way."

"Oh no, Madam, he is not come back."

"How did he go? On horseback?"

"Yes, Madam. The roads are so bad, he said he could bring the child more safely upon a cushion before him than in any other way."

"What horse did he take?"

"Old Black Bess."

"She is very quiet?"

"As a lamb, Madam."

"But in such a night as this! Surely he would take a chaise."

"No doubt he would do so, Madam; but the road for carriages is a very long way round, and even that, at best, but a narrow lane, full of ruts."

"A chaise would, of necessity, be a long time coming?"

"At any time; and on a night like—"

And as he spoke such a hurricane beat against the great heavy hall door, that it seemed as if it would burst it open. Every window rattled violently, the house itself seemed to rock to its foundation, and rain in deluges poured down upon the skylight.

"I almost think," said Willmore, "Mr. Yates would hardly venture out at all with the child in such weather as this. He must have determined to stay till morning."

"God grant it may be as you say."

And swiftly she re-ascended the stairs and stole into her husband's room, and sat down by his bedside and slid her hand into his. He still slumbered.

And so she sat, and hour and hour rolled by, told off by the sullen clang of the large stable clock. Gradually, however, the violence of the storm seemed to abate, and as the chill hours before dawn drew onwards, the deluge of rain was assuaged and the windows of heaven appeared to be closing again, and the water-drops fell in a sort of measured cadence, and the wind mourned rather than raged. Still the sufferer slumbered, and she, as she held his hand, sank insensibly into a dose and slumbered too; and the lamp threw a flickering ray upon the chamber, its wide extent and gloomy magnificence in part dimly seen through that gray twilight, in part lost in impenetrable shadow. But the light fell full upon the bed with its heavy dark green velvet curtains and its covering of quilted satin, in which lay one whom not all his wealth and splendour, not all his goodness and usefulness, not all the passionate devotion of a young and yearning heart, could redeem from an early

grave. For He had summoned him, whose sentence is without appeal. The span of life was at an end, the thread of life was spun out, and he must go.

In the sure and certain hope of a blessed futurity?

Yes. Through God's infinite mercies, in the sure and certain hope.

And though she, that young and fair, and idolizing and idolized one, on whom his heart doated, must be left behind. Yet in that sure and certain hope they both prepared to part, and bowed the head and accepted the cross in patience, and in faith in the restitution of all things.

They should meet again! Yes, they should meet again!

The flame of the lamp casts its long dim ray upon that angel face and figure, covered with her white dressing-gown, and her beautiful golden hair gathered up under her close nursing-cap, her long throat, bending like a lily, bowed down, for her head has sunk and rests against a pillow lying on one side of the bed, where she still holds his hand.

He had prepared himself to go, so soon as

his doom had been pronounced by the medical attendant, and he had only requested that the few hours which remained to him in this world might be passed with his wife in quiet and peace, without the hurry of attendance or the bustle of now useless endeavour.

They had taken leave of each other, as hearts that truly love do. For the infinite of love is a revelation in itself. Those who love most, believe most. Such feelings as theirs are made for eternity, and reveal eternity. But one fond feeling still remained unsatisfied, one tender tie still drew him back to earth.

His little child. He must see his little child again before he died. The boy was at his grandmother's, some twenty miles distance, and a track of desolate mountain, moor and woodland lay between the two houses. Twenty miles it was, right across the country; but by the carriage road, or rather through the deep lanes by which carriages might possibly make their way, nearly twenty miles more.

During the agonising paroxysms of extreme suffering on the one side and the almost equally agonising alternations of hope and fear upon the other, neither parent had seemed to miss or to

wish for the child; but when the fatal sentence was pronounced, and the calm of a terrible certainty succeeded to the agitations of suspense, the father asked to embrace his baby-boy before he died; and the poor mother's heart yearned with an intensity indescribable to see her infant once more, though for the last time, in his father's arms, and to hear him bless him before he died.

All—all he could do for this son of his love now. But oh, that blessing! Let him but have his father's dying blessing! was her heart's prayer.

Immediately upon this Mr. Yates had started, and owing to the state of the roads and the circumstances above mentioned, had decided upon crossing the country, mounted on a large powerful black horse, whose gentleness and steadiness were only equalled by his mighty strength, and upon bringing home the little boy placed upon a cushion before him—a manner of carrying young children at that time not uncommon, when the state of the cross-roads was often such, as to make travelling in carriages very slow and inconvenient, not to say dangerous work.

The steward—for Mr. Yates was the steward,

head and confidential man in this large establishment—had set forwards about twelve o'clock that morning; he calculated upon arriving at the Grange in about two hours and a half, resting there a couple of hours, and being back at Glistonbury between seven and eight o'clock in the evening.

The equinox was already past; yet still between seven and eight, though that night there happened to be no moon, sufficient light, he hoped, would remain to enable him to find his way easily through the moors home, to say nothing of the instincts of Black Bess, who was well acquainted with every foot of the way.

But seven and eight, and nine and ten, and midnight had passed, and no Mr. Yates had appeared; until at last the wearied household, concluding that the desperate state of the weather had prevented him setting out, or that he had taken a chaise, stole one after another to bed, leaving nobody up in that large household but Mr. Willmore and the housekeeper, and one or two of the older women-servants, whose sorrow and anxiety for their master and mistress made it impossible for them to rest. The old coachman and two or three of the grooms also

sat dozing in the servants' hall, whose windows looked towards the stable-yard, imagining that at any hour Mr. Yates might arrive.

So all was very still in that mansion of death, over which a feeling of solemn awfulness hung, and a heaviness crept over one and over another as it had done over the gentle and loving wife and mother herself.

It was so quiet, you might distinctly hear the death-watch ticking behind the case of the great kitchen clock, which was now down, lest its striking should disturb the master; and the snoring of the old bloodhound, which had been the old Lord's, and now lay stretched upon the kitchen hearth. For the raging tempest had begun to subside, and the winds to sing a mournful lullaby and requiem over the good man who was about to depart—the man whom all loved and honoured much, and deeply. Nature, at last, seemed to yield to the all-pervading melancholy, and to mourn,

"As things inanimate will mourn,"

over the unreturning grave, alas!

And so he slumbers: and she, her hand in his, dozes; and now opens her eyes, and gazes

at him; and now the heavy lids close again—for her heart is overladen with grief, and her eyes with watching, and the profound quiet sheds its influence upon her.

And in her doze, she sees that lovely, loving child, with his golden curling locks, and his large eyes of blue—so full of the mysterious depths of infant love and passion, and his cherub arms are round his father's neck; and that extenuated, but still most beautiful hand, is upon the child's head, and those eyes—those eyes into which she was wont to look, with something of the adoration of a poor Pagan when looking at his god—those eyes are raised up in prayer, and he is blessing his boy—their boy—the bond which bound them, if possible, still closer and closer together.

Oh! sweet dream!

She awakes suddenly from it. She springs up and listens. A cry!—yes! she heard a cry, surely. Again—again! What is it?—what is it?

CHAPTER II.

THE cry sounded as if it made a part of the dreams of an uneasy slumber, yet it started her awake; and as she still listened, confused and scarcely herself, it was repeated. Then there was a sort of subdued noise and hurry to be heard, upon that side of the house which was occupied by the servants, and with which the passage, into which her bed-room opened, communicated by a back staircase. There was, also, a large window at the end of this passage, which looked into the stable-yard.

As she listened, her ear rendered preternaturally acute by her state *of nervous* agita-

are drowned!" she screamed, rather than cried. "Oh! my God!—my God! the ford—the ford!" and she darted forwards, as if she would rush out of the stable-yard, and seek the lost herself.

Oh! how the wind came howling from that wilderness, and as if the cries of drowning wretches were mingling in the blast! But old Willmore hurried after his lady, and once more caught her by the gown.

"Madam—my lady—mistress! my master—my dying master!"

"Oh, yes! he is dying!—I know he is dying! But what will he do for his boy? Let me go!—let me go!" she cried, passionately, again endeavouring to rend her garments from his hands; "they are struggling in the waters! Run! run all of us—all of you! We may yet save them!"

"Alas! my lady—mistress, dear mistress! be patient. Think of God, dear mistress, and be patient. Oh dear—oh dear! The ford is six miles off!" cried the old man, bursting into tears.

"Six miles off! Do you say six miles off? Well, well, let us run right across the moor:

what is six miles? My God! will you none of you move an inch to save them!"

"They are gone already, mistress—Madam. John Gardner, and the coachman, and Will, started off as soon as Black Bess drove like a mad thing into the yard. They thought there must be a mischief: they are gone to see. Dear, dear mistress, what could you do? And my poor master dying all alone!" said the old man, sobbing aloud.

"Ah well—ah well!" she answered, looking round composedly, and as if her wits were beginning to leave her. "One dying, and the other drowned! You told me to call upon God, didn't you, old man?—'Out of the depths'—ay, that is it. Take me back to my husband's death-bed, Willmore! for my knees are knocking together, and I think I can't stand. Take me back to my husband, my lover, my only—only friend, to his death-bed. He'll soon be lost and gone, too! Take me back, Willmore!"

The old man obeyed, assisted by the housekeeper. They lifted, rather than led her back to her husband's bedside. She sank down again into the chair she *had quitted.* She

neither sighed, nor shed a tear; her heart felt as a stone within her; her glazed eyes turned wistfully to her husband. He lay there, still in a sort of quiet, unbroken doze; his breathings low and regular, except for a few pauses; one fair hand stretched out upon the bed. Gradually she slipped down upon her knees, took it in both hers, and laid her cheek against it.

It was very cold: no pressure answered to hers. The soul had already retreated to its last citadel, before taking its last flight!

Suddenly, as the flame of a candle before it expires leaps up in the socket, a glow seemed to revisit the frame. The eyes of the expiring man suddenly opened:

"The child," he uttered distinctly; "the child, love!—love, the child!" and he expired.

She could not and would not believe for some time that he was really gone; that the dark, mysterious curtain which severs the living and the dead had fallen; and that the one so loved, so clung to, the great reality of her existence, was dissolved. That, become an object of

faith, an existence to her spirit alone, which had been the most beloved of all actual existences.

She was stunned, confused as a stone; the idea was too overwhelming, too stupendous, too unintelligible for conception. She stood and gazed—and gazed—and gazed. She did not know where she was: all material things seemed reeling round her. It was no longer a substantial world in which she stood; everything was a dream now, for he was become a dream.

The poor servants, who had now crowded into the room—for all ceremony and distinction of rank had vanished before the awful realities of that night—her poor servants knew not what to do for her. Poor things, they were bewildered themselves, with grief and horror, and this dumb, tearless sorrow, terrified and perplexed them. They expected wailings and tears, and hysterical cries; but this terrible silence was the more terrible, because they could not understand it. They looked one at another, uncertain what to do.

Willmore was quite at a stand. The housekeeper, good woman, who had known the loss

of child and husband herself, comprehended a trifle better. She felt that out of this stupor the poor young creature must be roused, or that she would lose her senses. To do this she could imagine nothing better, than gently to lay her hand upon the lifeless body, as if with intent to move it. The poor young thing started at this, and stretched hastily forward, as if to prevent an impious hand from touching a sacred relic.

"How dare you?" she cried.

The spell was dissolved—she had spoken.

Willmore now ventured to come up to her, and with his kind, respectful, old servant's voice and manner, say: "Dear missis, you must come out of this; you must indeed."

"Must I?—must I? Yes, yes: it is all over now," and bursting into a flood of tears, she wailed, and cried aloud, as the old man gently led her away.

This kindly relief of nature lasted but till she entered the passage, and cast her eyes upon the window which looked towards the stables; then she suddenly begun shuddering and shaking. Then as suddenly she cried out: "I remember, I remember; there is nothing to keep me here now. Get out the cart as fast as you can, *that*

can go over the moors any way, and let me be off to the ford; let us follow the track—track the horse's feet, Willmore, as the wild Indians do; follow the trail—follow the trail; we shall find them yet—we shall find them yet."

Her speech was hurried and incoherent, but the old man was glad to find that the matter of it was sound.

"Yes, Madam," he said, "I will have the cart out instantly, and drive you myself the way to the ford. The track is easy enough to find; it lies right across the hills. Black Bess would be sure to take that one, as, poor beast, she could not have found a nigher. There, Mrs. Fulmer, get your mistress's cloak and bonnet, and fetch her a cup of warm milk and water too," he whispered; "she'll drink that. Don't try for anything more yet awhile."

He was glad to get his poor lady out upon the moors; though the wind whistled mournfully, and it was dismally cold; and the rain, though it had abated, still from time to time came gushing down in sudden showers.

So she suffered them to put on her cloak and bonnet, and placed herself hastily in the spring cart; for, as her recollection gradually

returned, her whole soul was agonizing to be at the ford, with that natural impatience to see and act herself, which possesses every one upon such occasions.

And so they set out for the moors. And now, the dawn began to break, and a silver line of light to show itself behind the desolate hills, from beneath a heavy, lifted cloud.

They followed a broken, irregular track over the waste, interrupted every here and there by pools of water left by the last night's rain, and by black miry bogs, through which the way was difficult and dangerous; and she, who kept her head over the side of the cart, and her eyes bent upon the road, could, though often intercepted, still follow the track which the horse, in his wild paroxysm of terror, had left through the black mire and clay. The deep indentations of his hoofs were plainly to be seen, but nothing else—no trace of anything else; not the shred of a garment; not a vestige; not a footstep!

And so, over these dismal hills, and through the deep valleys, mostly clothed on each side with a rough, brambly, almost impervious brushwood that intersected them, they arrived

at last where a mountain stream came rushing impetuously across the road, which was usually a brawling, and not very wide torrent, but now swelled by the night's rain to a deep, overwhelming river. Not only the usual bed of the stream was filled, but the banks high upwards were covered by the deluge of water which still came sweeping down.

The track ended; they had arrived at the ford. There, upon the steep side of the bank, where the road terminated, the ground was all torn up, as by the hoofs of a horse struggling upwards. The miry clay was trampled over; and here, at last, the marks of human footsteps were discernible. Of different sizes and shapes, however, and but little could be made out of them, for the earth was nearly reduced to one puddle. The road lay here in a hollow way, between high banks entirely grown over with broom, gorse and brushwood, and carpeted beneath with moss and bilberries; and the narrow track between appeared recently to have been trampled over by numbers. The deep print of the horse's hoofs were, however, yet discernible, amid the indistinct and confused footsteps of men.

There the cart stopped, and the young mother sprang to the ground. And first, almost on hands and knees, she examined the track, striving to discover the footsteps of a child amid the confusion of horses' feet which had trampled over the place. But no—no such footstep was there, not one, hunt as she might. Footsteps of men, and it might be of women—but not one of a child.

"I see no child's footsteps," she said at last, sadly, to her companion.

"Dear me, no, Madam. They would never have reached the bank through that deluge of water."

"Black Bess can swim. Black Bess *did* reach the bank. Mr. Yates was a bold and brave rider—ay, and a splendid swimmer, too. I am certain they were not drowned."

And as the mother, in the faith and divination of affection, pronounced these words in a raised tone, a sort of indistinct, odd sound was heard close by, seeming to issue from an almost impervious thicket which hung over the road.

"What was that? Did you hear anything?" she said to Willmore, turning suddenly towards the place whence the sound had proceeded.

And as she did so, she fancied she saw the tangled branches moving, as if some living being was concealed within.

"There is somebody there. I heard a low laugh. I saw the branches move—I am sure I did."

"Alas! Madam, the wind sings and wails wildly among the trees and hills, and blows the branches up and down. There is nothing there."

The men that had been sent out a few hours before had some time ago left this place, and had gone on, skirting the banks of the river, in hopes of discovering some vestiges of the lost ones. They were now heard returning; and the lady and her servant, uncertain what to do next, awaited their approach. They came up; they had something in their hands.

"What is that?" she called out.

"Poor Mr. Yates's hat. It has his mark in it."

"Where did you find it?"

"Low down the river. It seemed to have floated that way. It had been stopped by a bough which had fallen across the water, and so we were able to reach it. Poor *man*!"

"And nothing more?" she cried with feverish impatience, "nothing more?"

"Yes, Madam," said one of them, in a hesitating manner, it was the gardener, "a little child's glove, close by the water just below where my lady stands."

"Wet or dry?"

"Dry."

"My child is *not* drowned, then!" she almost shrieked. "I was certain of it."

But, oh! it rained and rained. The heavens were pitiless, or perhaps they poured down their torrents in sympathy with her who shed no tear. She passed that long and dreadful day, searching and searching, over and over again, the same spot.

But what could it avail? No vestige of child or man, except the little child's glove, which was found unwetted upon the bank, and the hat which had been swept forwards by the waters.

"The glove was dry," she kept repeating: "the child could not have been drowned, for the glove was dry."

"Ay, but," said Willmore, who, convinced

that both Mr. Yates and the child had perished, thought it best for his lady that she should acquiesce in a belief which with him amounted to a certainty, "are you certain, gardener, that the glove *was* dry when you found it? You put it in your warm pocket directly, didn't you?"

"To my belief," persisted the gardener, "it was as dry as a bone, when Will picked it up."

"Not so," interrupted Will, "not *quite* dry, as I remember; wetted with the rain mayhap, but not *quite* dry."

"You see, Madam, the glove was *not* dry, after all," said Willmore to his lady.

"Perhaps not," said she, "might have been wetted with the rain. But this glove," she added, gazing with a look indescribable at the tiny, innocent fingers, "has never been plunged in the water, I am certain."

"But, Will," persisted Willmore, well-intentioned, but ill-advised, "you say it was wet when you found it."

"I say it was *almost* if not altogether *dry*," repeated the gardener.

"And I am ready to swear it was as wet as muck," cried Will, in the spirit of contradiction.

"You see, Madam," said Willmore, respectfully but promptly.

"Why will you all conspire to persuade me he is drowned?" she cried out, and flung from them in a passion of tears.

They persisted in the search some time longer, but nothing more could be discovered. Meanwhile the rain kept falling unceasingly, and as it fell, gradually obliterating the traces of the footsteps by the side of the river. Indeed it was now evident that before the arrival of the lady and Willmore, those dispatched in advance had so trampled over the spot, that no inference could be drawn from any vestiges there to be found. Still the rain kept falling, till the poor young lady was wetted entirely through; but she felt not the chill, she was insensible to anything but the all-absorbing object, and long was it before she could be persuaded to abandon the hopeless search for some footsteps of her child.

She would fain have penetrated the briery thicket which overhung each side of the hollow

way, regardless of the dripping branches that poured their cold showers upon her head; but the bushes seemed impervious, and so they literally were, except to some well acquainted with certain little openings and narrow winding paths, which ran through them. Sometimes she clambered upon the rocky and moss-grown banks, which the mountain deluge had invaded, looking wistfully over the waste of waters, rendered still more dreary by the lowering aspect of the sky. Then she would come back to the ford, and again repeat her examination of the ground. Vainly, indeed, not a trace of the infant was to be discovered.

When we have lost some precious thing, how do we search and search again the same spot, vainly hoping to find that which we have already ascertained cannot possibly be there. The little glove meantime was laid in her bosom, and seemed to warm her poor heart. It was to her as an assurance that her child still lived—an assurance in which no other one shared.

Hour followed hour, faint, and wet, and starved; still she could not be persuaded to leave the spot. At last poor old Willmore, quite pale

and exhausted himself, and his face blue with cold and fatigue, succeeded in inducing her to re-enter the cart, and to return home.

He said that when the rain ceased, which it evidently would soon do, for the clouds began to gather up, and a faint, cold, yellow light was dimly appearing in the west—that when the rained ceased, the torrent would soon run itself down; that a man could be left to watch; and that when the water was low enough his lady could return and track the course of the subsiding water, and no doubt some other indications of the sad story would appear.

So she suffered herself to be persuaded, and got into the cart, and turned her face away from the fatal spot. It was not till she did so that she seemed fully to realise her woe. Hope, almost amounting to certainty, had kept up her spirits whilst searching; but now the search was over, and nothing found but the little glove. And she felt that he was drowned, that her darling was lying cold in the bosom of those deep waters, and that she was a childless widow upon the face of the earth.

She became very faint now, for the spirit which had supported her was extinct at last,

and she sank to the bottom of the cart and lay there, feeling no longer able to sit up; and so she remained, her head resting upon a cushion, which Willmore had put under it; and, covered with a horse-cloth which happened to be there, and the cart jolting her over the rough stones; she, so delicate, and of a frame so susceptible, and her clothes all saturated with water, clinging to, and chilling the very marrow of her bones; but none of all this extremely suffering seemed to reach her, for her soul was absorbed in her misery. In utter darkness she lay—all around was dark, nothing but utter darkness. No ray of light, no hope, no life. She could not, out of the depths of her despair, lift up her eyes to Him who never faileth; she was too entirely exhausted to do this. Oh, pray that your faith fail not! ye that lie in the temptation of deep distress, pray that your faith fail not!

In this manner they at last reached the mansion, and the cart stopped. Then she lifted up her head, and said, looking round in a bewildered manner:

"Are we come home?"

"Yes, Madam," said Willmore, and seeing

she did not move, for by this time she was quite stiff with cold, he tried to lift her out of the cart, but he was too weak himself; so he called for help, and the lady's-maid and the housekeeper, and a footman or two, all helping, they lifted her into the house.

Oh! as she entered that hall again, entered it for the first time, so silent and desolate, because they were all dead, how heavily sunk her heart; but she did not weep, her grief was too big for tears.

As they carried her through that noble hall, she cast up one glance at its fretted roof, all inlaid with azure and gold, and then she closed her eyes, and they thought she had fainted. Not altogether that, however, but she was all but insensible; yet her mind, poor thing, could not fall asleep.

"Carry her up, and put her in a warm bed," old Willmore next said, "for she is almost clammed altogether with wet and cold."

So they took her up, and took off her dripping garments, and laid her in her bed all —all alone—alone—alone for ever!

She was passive; she let them do as they would. The oppression of her great grief

seemed to weigh her down and render her motionless, as one under the oppression of some mighty burden. In this state she lay a short time, and then the reaction began, and fever set in, and in the course of a few hours her life was declared to be in danger by the medical men, who stood anxiously watching at her bedside.

Two days and two nights were spent in a low dreamy delirium; the third she awoke again to consciousness, but she was so feeble that she could with difficulty speak so as to be heard. As soon as she was restored, even thus imperfectly to herself, she begged to see Willmore.

The grey-haired old man was soon at her bedside. His old cheeks were flushed, and his eyes red with weeping, and it was with difficulty he could restrain himself from weeping aloud now when he came into his poor lady's room.

She stretched out her pale thin hand, for the eight-and-forty hours of fever had wasted her very much; and in a voice scarcely audible, so

low and faint it was, asked him what had been done whilst she lay deprived of her senses.

"Everything that was necessary," he said, "had been ordered, and for the rest it only waited her directions. Everything so far, had been thus arranged as things were ordered at the funeral of his old master, the late lord, the father of him that was just gone. He supposed his lady would wish to have it so. But for the external ceremonials, he waited till she could give her own orders."

"Let it all be as it was before," she said, almost with indifference—her heart was too much absorbed by her living grief, to cast much thought upon the vain consolation of funeral ceremony; "all as it was before—omit nothing. Take care all is done with the utmost respect. But it was of other things I wanted to speak to you. What news—what news?"

"Nothing to be properly called news, Madam. But—"

"The river must have returned to its bed," said she.

"It has, Madam. No more rain has fallen."

"And has nobody—" making as if she would start up herself; but she was almost

too feeble to lift her hand, she sank back again, and groaned.

"We have searched the bed of the river on both sides."

"And found nothing?"

"Yes, Madam. But—"

"What have you found? Speak out!—don't be afraid. Speak out!—don't be afraid."

But she pressed her two thin hands against her heart, as she said so; for she believed something was going to be said that would kill her.

"Had my mistress not better wait a few days, before she hears any more of this dismal story?" said the old man.

"No!" she cried, with a strange violence; "tell me at once! They have found the child's dead body!" And then she began in a sort of wailing chant to cry and sing: "Oh! bring it to me—bring my cold, dead darling to me, and let me lay him in my bosom. My dear—dear little boy! Ah! it is so cold, it will not warm him!"

"You mistake me, Madam — mistress. Alas! alas! we have not found the body!"

"You *have* not!" And a bright ray of joy shot from her eyes. "You *have* not!

Did I not tell you I was certain my baby was not drowned? Where is the glove?—the glove! Who took away the glove?"

They held it before her; she snatched at it; spread out once more the tiny fingers, and displayed the little palm with a sort of wild triumph.

"His glove has never been in the water!" she cried; "it has *not* been in the water! A few drops of rain may have wetted it; but it has not been *dipped* in water. I am certain the child is not drowned."

"Alas! Madam, and his little hat and feather—"

"His little hat and feather! And what of his little hat and feather?"

"That, Madam, has been found in the river's bed."

"Found his little hat and feather! Oh! bring it! Give it—give it to me!"

It was brought to her all shapeless, and spoiled by the effect of the water, in which it had been so long lying. The white ribbons were all stained and discoloured with mire, and the poor little feather was hanging, broken and uncurled, over the brim.

She caught it greedily in her arms, and pressed it to her bosom, and seemed as if she would devour it with kisses. It was like the living image of her child. She kept kissing it passionately. But she drew not the same conclusion from the finding of the little hat, which the others did. For presently she lifted up her eyes, and said to Willmore:

"The hat is all spoiled by the wet; but the glove was *dry!*" And then she laid both hat and glove in her bosom; and as if the very touch of them soothed and comforted her, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE Very Reverend the Dean of M—— was a portly man, such as a Dean is wont to be; and, in much state and importance, he resided in the cathedral town of M——, and watched over the magnificent minster, and took very much pains as respected the voices of his choristers, and kept an excellent table, and a very handsome carriage, and performed all the duties of his station most exemplarily—that is to say, in the way those duties were performed some years ago, before a new view of the obligations belonging to their vocation had broken upon churchmen, and that very great change for the better had begun, which

has made, and is still making, such rapid progress in this our day.

Dean Villars was, at the moment when I am about to introduce you to him, seated at the bottom of a table covered with the choicest delicacies, all cooked to perfection; for he was a man of refined taste in every matter which he thought worthy of his attention, from Gothic architecture, down to soufflé puddings; and was indeed generally acknowledged, by all his acquaintance, as the arbiter from whom, in all and every one of such things, there was no appeal.

The Dean loved good eating: it may be, a little for its own sake, but far more he loved it for its accompanying glory; for great was the glory, as he considered these things, of eating well. It was something to be a Dean, and to have charge of one of the noblest cathedrals in the kingdom; it was something to have a choir second to none except the one in His Majesty's Chapel at Windsor; but it was almost more, in his eyes, to have the reputation of keeping the best table known.

It must be owned, there is taste to be dis-

played in the setting forth of a table, and the array of a dining-room, as well as about other things. And what with the massive plate, and what with the sparkling crystal, and what with the fine Oriental china, of the plates and dishes, and what with the real beauty of colouring displayed in the arrangement of the viands, a more agreeable picture than one of the Dean's dinners could not be well presented. And Bassano, who evidently recollected this when painting his "Marriage of Cana," would have delighted in it. He would also have found little cause to quarrel with the figure of the Dean, now seated at the foot of this table; as little with that of his lady, a handsomely dressed gentlewoman, at the head.

The Lady Marion—Westmore having been her maiden name—daughter of the Earl of Carpentas, having fallen in love, some years gone by, with the Dean's good looks when he was only a poor curate, had been allowed to bestow her hand upon him when he had been presented to two rich livings, and had added to them the title of Mr. Dean. Waiting for which, many years had elapsed, and the bloom

upon the lady's cheek had somewhat faded; her fine eyes had assumed a somewhat anxious expression; and her figure, once symmetry itself, had become rather more thin and delicate than was quite consistent with beauty.

The Dean and his lady had now been married several years, and after a long space of time, one little daughter had blest their union. She was at this time about two years of age.

There was a small, select party this day dining with the Dean. Among them might be seen one or two professional singers; for the Dean was a great lover of music, and sometimes took a part in a glee himself; and, be it observed, *en passant*, when he did so, the fine bass tones of his sonorous voice added greatly, in the opinion of all good people, and more especially of such as had just dined at his table, to the beauty of the execution.

There were present also, besides the professional gentlemen above alluded to, some of the principal residents of the cathedral town, or

belonging to the families in the neighbourhood, and one or two beneficed clergymen of the place.

One of these last I am going to introduce you to; and I am sorry to say he is also one of the old, old school—that school which is, as I said above, fast dying out from among us, being succeeded by that earnest, fervent spirit which is the life and ornament of religion in this our happier day.

This gentleman was not, however, like Mr. Dean, a pluralist. Not that he would have been unwilling to be that, or any other *list* which would have put crowns into his purse; for his whole soul was given up to covetousness and base self-interest; vices which, in his profession, once indulged—and there is plenty of time and leisure, if men so choose it, to indulge them—vices which cut into, canker and corrupt, the very core of the heart, and render a man's spiritual office nothing but a hideous mockery.

This gentleman was as unamiable in his external appearance, as one so corrupted at heart should rightly be. He was a dark, beetle-

browed, tall, raw-boned sort of man, with a harsh voice and a harsh eye. Seldom he went among his poor. Parish visitations amid the filthy and unsightly houses which constituted the majority in that portion of the town where his cure lay, were too disagreeable to be thought of. Besides, as he often said, he really wanted time. He kept a curate to do all that sort of thing. Yes, and he allowed him fifty pounds a year, and a very handsome salary too; one had been ready to come for forty, but the fellow was an ass, and besides stuttered so horribly, that he did not think his bishop would like it. So he gave fifty pounds to Mr. Lovel, a very accomplished young fellow, forced to quit the army on account of his health, and then nearly reading himself into a decline at Cambridge; but poor fellow, success there, was his only chance in life, for he had neither fortune nor connection that he knew of, and so he had given him the curacy. And so in truth he had, and without the slightest regard as to the other's fitness for the task. But who that had seen his too bright eye, or the colour that tinted his cheek, or had heard his hollow cough, but would have deemed

him as unfit as the Rector himself, to pass his days visiting among the miserable wretches that crowded the streets near the wharfs. But Mr. Lovel was a true servant of his Master, and not only did he perform his own share of the duty well, but he contrived to fulfil most of that which the other left undone.

But of this curate, and of the parish under his care, more by-and-by.

The parish, indeed, lay at the extremity of the cathedral town. It included some wretched suburban streets in the neighbourhood of the wharfs which bordered the river, but it likewise stretched far into the wild and wooded country upon the northern side of the city. Most wild and beautiful this tract was, composed of red sandstone and marl, with rocks and hills thickly covered by primeval woods, composed of the noble trees which, upon that substratum, usually attain to an almost fabulous size and beauty. The rocks broke forth in bold faces and precipices, forming deep valleys, which intersected these hills, the valleys being mostly traversed by clear mountain streams. The whole district was sylvan and solitary, scantily inhabited, and that chiefly by

charcoal-burners or miners, these latter finding employment where the geological structure admitted of veins of various metals being formed. The whole region was, perhaps, one of the wildest, most romantic, not to say most savage, to be found in the west of England.

The inhabitants of these regions, were, at that time of day, little removed from absolute barbarism. Utterly ignorant they were of the very rudest form of Christianity, gross, brutal, and depraved. They needed, indeed, the bold and enthusiastic spirit of a reformer to carry light and civilization among them.

The portion of the country, however, which bordered upon the town of M—— had not as yet, benefitted by any such exertions. Nothing could exceed the utter rudeness and want of all common civilization, of the place, when Mr. Gorhambury was first inducted into the living, except it may be, the state in which Mr. Lovel, after Mr. Gorhambury had ministered thereto ten long years, found it.

Such evils multiply immeasurably by neglect, and no parish had been more neglected, even in those days of supineness and indifference, than this.

But it is time to return to the dinner-table. There sits the Dean, his napkin tucked into his button-hole, enjoying his turbot and lobster sauce; and there sits the Rector, with his harsh, hard countenance, his black eye, and his cold but complacent smile, on the Dean's right hand. He is endeavouring to unite a flattery, but too agreeable to the somewhat spoiled dignitary, with the indulgence of a sarcastic spirit, but too agreeable to himself—for Mr. Gorhambury was a bitter man.

And now they have taken a glass of the Dean's most particular Madeira, wine that has travelled from tropic to tropic, and been hoarded in the spacious cellars of the deanery, nobody knows how long; and the Rector has pronounced it unrivalled, and is holding up his glass to catch the light upon it, from the brilliant pyramid of waxen candles that adorns the centre of the table, when his servant enters the room, comes up to him, and presents him with a letter sealed with black wax, saying that it has just arrived by express.

"Where from?—where from?"

"From Castle Avon, Sir," the man replies, in the humble subdued tone, with which

the reverend gentleman expects to be addressed by his inferiors.

Mr. Gorhambury started at the name, and with a "May I take the liberty?" to the Dean, hurriedly breaks the seal.

But scarcely had his eye glanced over three lines, than he started up with a suddenness that threatened to overset the table, and hastily turning to his dignified friend, said: "May I entreat a few moments' conversation with you in private?" hurriedly left the room. He was followed, with a little less precipitation by the courtly Dean, whom neither life nor death could move, to the undignified vulgarity of being in a hurry.

When the Dean reached the library to which Mr. Gorhambury had retreated, he found him with the letter held in both hands, reading it with an almost greedy impatience—seeming as if he would devour the contents with his eyes, which were staring widely, whilst his cheek was flushed, and his hair almost on end.

"What *can* have happened, my good Sir?" asked the Dean.

"My friend — my good friend — my dear friend," replies the other, in a tone of the utmost hurry and agitation. "Something so wholly unexpected—so extraordinary—so out of all calculation—so very strange—so very *dreadful!*" he added, as if recollecting himself, whilst his eyes were sparkling with exultation, and his lips vainly endeavouring not to smile. "Something so sad—so lamentable—" he was running on.

"Well, but what is it?" asks the Dean quietly.

He was a much more sensible, and a much more amiable person than his friend, as you have perhaps already discovered, and for which friend, well as he suited him in many respects, he entertained, at times, a little good-natured contempt.

"Let us know what it is—what has happened?"

"Oh! my dear friend, how shall I find words? So shocking an affair—so unexpected —so inconceivably wonderful—I declare to you,

it is the very last thing I ever thought of—never looked for it in the least—never contemplated the possibility of such a thing; far from any ambitious views in that direction—believe me, I am overwhelmed—confounded."

"Well, but what is it? have they made you Archbishop of Canterbury?" asked the Dean, with a slightly sarcastic smile.

"Oh! nothing in that way—nothing of that sort at all. Preferment in that line, whether merited or not, I never anticipated. My poor nephew, you know, was not one particularly—but good heavens! such a thing as this! Why, it is not to believed!" And he had recourse to his letter again.

The Dean began to be impatient to return to his dinner. The more so, perhaps, because after all he began to suspect that these demonstrations of emotion would end, as they had sometimes done before, in some matter of no very particular interest. So he rose from the chair into which he had thrown himself upon entering, and saying:

"Well, my dear Sir, they will be wondering

what we are about;" approached the Rector, as if to force on the explanation.

"Oh, my dear friend!" cried the other, seizing his hand with much effusion, "only think—only imagine—congratul—No, no—condole. I ask for your condolence, my dear friend, indeed I do. Aylmer died last night, and—and—and his poor little son—his heir—his only child—is gone too—is drowned!"

"This is very shocking intelligence, indeed," said the Dean, gravely.

"Is it not? As I said, dreadful! awful! terrible! The poor young man—my cousin—my own first cousin's son—the nearest relation he had in the world; and the little boy—the poor little child—drowned—Tuesday night! Let me see; yes, on that terrible Tuesday night—you recollect, Sir, what a storm it was. Crossing the mountains, had to pass Dana ford—waters swelled—child and steward both drowned! Would you like to read the letter?"

"Yes," said the Dean, taking it from his hand, and sitting down to peruse it, feeling, in truth, very much shocked.

Lord Aylmer had been universally beloved, and he could not so suddenly hear of the death of the amiable young nobleman without considerable emotion. The child too—the heir. Everybody takes a certain interest in a little boy of four years old, who is sole heir to a large property. It was very—very shocking!

The Dean took out his spectacles leisurely, and began to read the letter, whilst Mr. Gorhambury, in a state of excitement he found it impossible to master, perambulated the room with hasty steps; the extacy, the unbounded exultation with which the news had filled his bosom being unchecked by the slightest touch of genuine sympathy with so hideous a misfortune. The manifestation of his feelings, however, being a little restrained by his fear of displaying anything like indecent joy, before the man he was accustomed to look up to, and desired to stand well with.

He was as yet too new to the splendid prospects before him, to perceive that he and Mr. Dean, had, as far as worldly dignities were concerned, already changed places. One, whom he had regarded so long as *his superior in* every

respect, he could not, all at once, bring himself to disregard.

The letter was from poor Willmore. He, all bewildered with the sudden responsibility which the death of the steward, following so speedily on that of his master, added to the violent illness of his lady, threw upon him, could think of nothing better to do, than address himself to one, whom all the world knew was, the child being no more, his master's next heir. But it had taken him, poor old man! a good many hours to collect his bewildered senses, sufficiently even to resolve upon this step; so it was not until the third day after the terrible disaster, and just as poor young Lady Aylmer was gradually being restored to her senses, that Mr. Gorhambury received the old servant's letter, which ran thus:

"Sir—or my Lord,

"As I believe I must call you henceforward, for there has been a dismal tragedy acted at this castle, and sad and dreadful is the news I take up my pen to convey.

"My dear lady, at present lying in her bed quite delirious, and, as the doctor thinks, in a dying state, or not likely to mend at least for a long time, being unable to give orders, so that we know not what to do; we think it right, Sir, that you should be informed without delay of what has happened. Oh, Sir! you must know, our honoured, and respected, and beloved master, young Lord Aylmer, whom we doted on as the apple of our eyes, as well and truly we may say; who was never strong, as doubtless you know; took on for worse last Tuesday was a sen'night. My lady had all the doctors in these parts, and they flattered her as how he was getting better, and would come round, and all be as usual again. But, somehow, my lady was not content—the more the pity—with her own country practitioners, who must have known our dear master best, seeing they had practised on him for so many years; and she must needs send express for some great man from London, who came down in a mighty hurry in a post-chaise and four; and no sooner does he set foot in the poor young lord's chamber—I misgave him from the first, seeing

he didn't half look like a great doctor, but just like another man for all the world—what do he, but say, as how all the other gentlemen has been doing is quite altogether right; but he alters the treatment nevertheless, and gives him a dose of physic, 'which,' says he, 'if it does not work its due effect, no power on earth can save him.'

"I saw Mr. Patten shake his head as he come out of the room, following the great doctor down stairs, so he couldn't see him; and shrug his shoulders to me, as much as to say, what I understood well enough; but my young lady believed the great man. And weeping, and weeping, she came down stairs; and he said:

"'My dear Lady Aylmer, be patient, be composed—there is still a chance.'

"'Oh, do not deceive me!' I heard her say, 'the truth—the whole truth.' And so the physic did no good, and the next morning it was settled among the doctors, that the poor young lord must be dead in twenty-four hours; and they told him so himself—enough to kill him outright—but, as I thought, he took

it wondrous firm; and so did my lady. Weeping, and weeping, and kissing him—kissing his forehead, and kissing his hands; but no screams, or hysterical like. And then that poor young couple settled to spend the short time allowed them together; but my lord wished to see his child, who was at his grandmother's; and so the roads being dreadful bad, besides a vast way round for a carriage, Mr. Yates, that is—that *was*, poor man, the steward, proposes he shall take a very steady mare of ours, honest Black Bess, and ride across the country, and bring the dear little gentleman home before him. And my young lady was charmed with the scheme, as thinking she should have the child in his poor father's arms all the sooner. But you know what a storm arose on Tuesday evening. Some say a water-spout fell in the mountains, for not in the memory of man has the Dana been known to be so swelled by many, many a foot; and crossing the ford in the dark, and the river so swelled, the poor creatures were both drowned—and the Lord have mercy upon their souls! The child, sweet innocent, is gone to be an angel in

heaven; and we will hope the best for poor Mr. Yates, who was an upright and honest man, though somewhat stern with the poor, and especially could not abide a vagrant, a squatter, or a gipsy—such as there may be too many in these parts. But, poor creatures! what are they to do? they can't rot in a jail—but, no more of that—and rest be to his spirit, for a more faithful steward, as regarded his master's monies, never lived; and if he was hard now and then with a poor servant, why he meant it for the best—so rest be to his soul. And so, honoured Sir, as I said, all of us poor servants being at a loss what to do, we have agreed to send express to you, as being our late honoured lord's nearest relation; and, the poor young gentleman being lost, as we believe, his Lordship's next heir. And waiting your honour's commands,

"I am, obediently, your humble servant,

"My Lord,

"THOMAS WILLMORE."

The Dean folded the letter deliberately, with this remark:

"I did not know that the title descended to collaterals."

"Nor does it," answered his friend, turning quickly round.

"The estate is entailed, I conclude?"

"Strictly."

"And you stand next in the entail?"

"Unquestionably. What could make you doubt it?"

"It is a difficult matter what to say, in a contingency such as this," the Dean continued, after a pause, and rising deliberately from his chair. "One cannot congratulate a man upon a succession which falls to him under such pathetic circumstances. All I can say is—as fall the succession must upon some one—I am glad it has fallen upon you."

"Thank you, thank you!"

"And now, shall we return to the dining-room?"

"No, you will excuse me; I shall set forwards immediately: my presence must be required at the castle. I will take leave to ring the bell, and order a chaise and pair from the 'Eagle,' without delay. I shall just

stop for a moment at home, to communicate the intelligence to Mrs. Gorhambury, and then hasten onwards as speedily as possible. I shall reach Castle Avon by breakfast-time to-morrow morning."

"Do you know much of the unfortunate young widow?"

"Very little—except that she was a great beauty. The poor young lord met with her in some out-of-the-way place. She was a daughter of nobody, I believe. I have seen her only once or twice; thought her an ordinary creature, but undoubtedly handsome."

"Well then, as there seems nothing more to be said, I think that I will return to the dining-room. They will be wondering what can have become of us; and the venison will be quite cold. Won't you have a slice brought in here, and another glass or two of Madeira, to fortify yourself against the journey? I shall hear from you, no doubt; and if you can make any use of me, command me."

"Thank you—thank you; I will be sure

to write. Nothing—nothing; I am too much agitated to taste a morsel; but a glass of Madeira—yes, if you please, a glass of Madeira."

A quarter of an hour more, and Mr. Gorhambury's chaise was heard rattling at a rapid pace from the Deanery door.

CHAPTER IV.

THE mourner had enjoyed some refreshing sleep that night, and she awoke pressing the little glove to her bosom, and with a sensation of renewed strength, which led to the fond hope that she should be able to rise, and renew her search that very day.

The morning broke calm and bright, and the September sun gleamed through her half-opened curtains; the pale blue mists swelled up between the trees, and their shadows fell upon the shining grass; the autumn birds were whistling and calling.

She had the night before fastened the precious little glove to a slender gold chain, and

attached it round her neck; and never did Catholic with more emotion press a saintly relic to his heart, than she this little vestige of her child. And never did enthusiast with more holy hope regard his reliquary, than she hers—she treasured it as the assurance that her child lived.

In the certainty that he lived, she never wavered for a moment. She looked upon this as a most indisputable fact, and expected that all the world would regard it in the same light.

Her impatience to rise and proceed in the search, was therefore intense; and without waiting to call her maid, who was sleeping upon a sofa in the dressing-room adjoining, she determined to rise, and begin to dress herself, for to lie in bed quietly any longer, seemed impossible. So she tried to rise.

But alas! no sooner did she endeavour to do so, than insupportable pains seized her, and, with a scream of agony, she was obliged to throw herself back upon her bed.

Her maid was startled at the sound, and hurried to her. With her assistance she again

endeavoured to raise herself; in vain, for the present the use of the lower limbs seemed totally lost. Once convinced of this, the poor mother, without speaking, laid herself down again, in bitter resignation; pressed the little glove more closely than ever to her bosom, turned her face to her pillow, and wept.

"Don't cry so—don't, Madam; have patience, you will soon be better."

"But time! time!" she cried out aloud, "oh, precious—precious time! And my boy! —my poor, helpless little boy!—where is he? where is he?"

The maid shook her head, and a tear was in her eye.

"And you, too!" cried the mother, with almost violence; "one and all of you—are you in a conspiracy to rob me of my child? I tell you, woman, he is alive—I am certain he is alive."

The eye of the attendant glanced involuntarily at the poor little drenched and faded hat, with its broken uncurled feather. The lady had ordered it to be hung upon the wall,

close by the bed, from whence she could at all times see it.

"Yes, I know—I know. The hat was drenched, but the glove was *dry*. The hat might have fallen off into the river, but how could the glove be dry?"

Alas poor thing! but *was* the glove dry? Every one but herself were satisfied that the glove was *not* dry—every one but the poor mother.

Now, the little glove was a somewhat remarkable little affair; and a prettier one never had been drawn upon an infant hand. It had been made by the proud and happy mother herself; and in fanciful imitation of the ornamented gauntlet of old days. It was of buff leather, such as riding-gloves are now made of, but of the softest and finest description that could be obtained. Lady Aylmer had lined it with blue silk and cotton-wool, and finished it like a little old-fashioned horseman's glove; it was pinked and beautifully embroidered with a tiny pattern in blue silk. And proud and happy had both mother and child been, when these gloves were worn.

It would appear that the nurse—the weather being fine when Mr. Yates and his charge set out—had dressed the little boy in his best clothes, and had put on these favourite gloves to please her lady, as she thought.

The poor thing had good reason for laying so much stress upon the circumstance of the glove being dry. It had been found close by the river, but half-hidden under a broad leaf of one of those gigantic bur-thistles which are seen by the way-side in desolate places; and this had served in some degree to shelter it from the heavy rain, so, that though it was indeed a little damped and stained, it had not been drenched, and the lining was perfectly dry, and not in the least discoloured. Evidence conclusive for her, though, as it appeared, little regarded by any one else, that the little wearer must have reached the shore.

Will, who found it, said it was wet when he picked it up; and every one felt so convinced that the child was in fact drowned, that they troubled themselves not with minute details. The little drenched hat was proof enough for them.

Lady Aylmer was a woman of a strong and determined will, sweet as was the character of her beauty, and gentle and soft as was her usual demeanour. She had that good gift, which the French express by the words, *avoir du caractère*, and for which our language wants an equivalent; for when I use, for want of a better term, that of determined will, I seem to imply a something of obstinacy or wilfulness, which I do not intend. Lady Aylmer was neither obstinate nor wilful; but once convinced that she was right, she was not to be deterred from pursuing the course, her persuasions indicated.

She was neither to be flattered, nor frightened, nor tempted by indolence or secret misgivings, from following up what she thought it right and best to do.

And now, unhappy creature! behold her with her unchanging conviction that the child still lived—that in some extraordinary manner or other, it had reached the land, and on the land dropped its glove—chained down powerless, to her sick bed, and obliged in the most desperate circumstances of her life to act by deputy

she, who even in the smallest circumstances, held it as a maxim that what is done by deputy is but half done.

But her clear and strong faculties did not forsake her. Her mother's love, the very intensity of that anxiety which would have unnerved many another, only seemed to give additional force to her power of self-command; enabling her to collect her thoughts with astonishing calmness, and consider what course, under the circumstances, it would be most advisable to pursue.

So finding it impossible to quit her bed, she resigned herself to her fate, and lay for some little time collecting her thoughts and spirits; then she desired Willmore to be sent for.

The old man entered the room; aged, as it would seem, almost ten years by the events of the last two days. He looked, moreover, particularly nervous and uncomfortable. He had not in the least expected—for the medical practitioner had held out no hope of the kind—that his lady would be so far restored to herself in this short period of time, as to

be able to attend to business and to give directions; and as, upon their interview of the evening before, she had not said a word about sending for Mr. Gorhambury, he felt uneasy as to the propriety of having taken that measure upon himself; and with the want of moral courage common to ordinary minds, had not ventured to mention what he had done to Lady Aylmer. So he was much humbled in spirit, and came in looking more uncomfortable than was quite compatible with the joy he ought naturally to have felt at seeing her restored to the possession of her reason. As he came up to the bedside, his wrinkled hands trembled a good deal.

"Come hither, Willmore: I have much to say to you," she began, struggling hard to preserve the composure she had with so much effort attained. "Don't stand, sit down; I shall talk better with you when you are seated."

"No, Madam—pray—please—I would rather stand."

"You have taken the proper steps towards the arrangement of the funeral of my dear Lord Aylmer?" she said, steadily. "Right. But

there is a matter more important than that—the child—"

"Alas! Madam, why will you flatter yourself?" stammered out the old man. "There is nothing more to be done; the stream has run down to its usual channel, and nothing can we find but the hat."

"You told me so before. The hat proves nothing. I must have stronger evidence than that, before I will be convinced that my child did not come to land."

"And what can your Ladyship think has become of him—of them?"

"*That* is the mystery; but they were not drowned. Depend upon it, *that* shore they reached. Now, Willmore, I must have better advice and assistance than you can give me, my good old man. But in the first place, I must have a reward of five thousand pounds immediately offered, and printed papers published to that effect throughout the country—throughout the kingdom—throughout the empire—throughout Europe." She went on with increasing energy, "Five thousand pounds to any one who will restore that child alive. Send, therefore,

to Mr. Saxston, whom your lord once employed about some business or other. Now that poor Yates is gone, I have no one else I know to apply to—so send for Mr. Saxston."

Willmore hesitated.

"Why do you hesitate to obey me?" she said, with a slight accent of displeasure.

"Mr. Saxston has been here already, my lady, and he says—"

"Been here! And what brought him here, without being sent for?" she exclaimed, with some surprise. "Well, well, well, that is no affair of yours. If he is still in the castle, send him up to me."

Willmore obeyed instantly.

Mr. Saxston was not gone, and in about a quarter of an hour, which seemed as an age to the impatience of Lady Aylmer, a low and very humble sort of knock, was heard at the door, and upon the lady's-maid opening it, the limb of the law presented himself. He came in with a profound bow, and then, upon a sign from Lady Aylmer, approached the bed, his counte-

nance all the time expressing the deepest grief, awe, and commiseration, that it was possible for countenance to express.

Mr. Saxston was a middle-sized man, with a lean figure, and a face that it was impossible to look upon, without a certain feeling of dislike. His keen grey eye, deep set in his head, looked out from under his contracted brows—contracted, not so much with thought, as with that kind of ingenuity which men employ to detect a puzzle—rather keenly searching what was without, then engaged with that which lay within. His mouth was thin and false—his aspect hungry, wily, and yet with a certain servility about him that was altogether displeasing.

Lady Aylmer had never seen him before, and the moment she looked upon him she was sorry he had been called. He came up to her bedside, however, with an air of such profound commiseration and respect, that the next moment she was angry at herself, for taking such an unjustifiable prejudice against any one.

"I sent for you, Mr. Saxston, because I am deprived of the power of acting for myself; and

the deplorable events of the last two days, have rendered the utmost expedition and energy necessary."

Mr. Saxston sighed, and looked down.

"You are aware," she went on with rapidity, half raising herself in her bed, and her eyes flashing with impatience and anxiety as she spoke, "that my child, my boy, has disappeared, and that we have been unable to obtain the slightest trace of him—except, indeed, this," she added, lifting up the glove from her bosom. "You observe it is *dry*. The child came to land; somewhere he is, and he must be found."

"Found!" repeated Mr. Saxston, turning his eyes, like the rest, from the glove, as of a matter of no account. "No doubt, my lady, he will be found."

"You say so!" she exclaimed, with almost a shriek of joy.

Again Mr. Saxston's countenance assumed the most lamentable expression, as he added: "I am much afraid that he will be found as it will give you little comfort to find him."

She looked stunned for a moment, at this sudden destruction of the wild hope which his

first sentence had excited; then she collected herself, and, with great steadiness and seriousness, said:

"Mr. Saxston, I see you have taken up the same unfounded impression as the rest. I am convinced it is a mistaken one; and it is my firm faith that God, in His own good time, will restore my child to me. I believe in His Providence, Sir; and I do *not* believe that He would have implanted this deep, this rooted conviction in a wretched mother's mind, to deceive and disappoint her. I beg, therefore, if you are inclined to undertake this business for me, that, in what you are about to do you will dismiss from your mind every impression or prejudice you may have taken up, and act in all things as though you as implicitly believed as I do, that the child lives, and has, in some mysterious manner, disappeared. Is what I honestly demand possible? Can you promise me that in this manner you will attend to my convictions, and energetically act up to them, as if they were your own?"

"I hope Lady Aylmer only does me justice in believing, that if she is pleased to confide any

business to me, I shall act as if it were herself. Her impressions and convictions shall be made my own. What would she wish to have done?"

"In the first and immediate place, before you leave this house, take measures for advertising the child in every paper, of every description, in the united kingdom; and for having handbills instantly printed, and circulated as widely as it is possible, promising a reward of five thousand pounds upon recovery of the child alive."

The man of the law took care not to shake his head at what he considered, a vain and useless expense; that was no affair of his, at least.

"We must have an exact description of the young gentleman," he said; "and if he had any particular mark upon the body, by which he might be identified, it would be well—"

"What use in that? the child was only lost on Tuesday night! No! I know of no such mark. Do you think we shall not recognise one another when we meet?" she added, with a certain contempt.

The attorney was silent, as if waiting for more; and then the poor mother, her cheek

reddening and her eyes glistening as she spoke, with some impetuosity, went on:

"He is not quite four years old, but with the intelligence of a being twice his age. Large blue eyes, fair complexion, flaxen hair, hanging in large curls all round his little neck; a full mouth, like an opening rosebud; a nose of the sweetest proportions; little chubby hands and arms; limbs like transparent wax. Oh, my child! my infant! my lovely, lovely, beauteous boy!"—and she hastily sank down in her bed, and covered herself with the bed-clothes. She conquered her emotion, and uncovering her face, again looked up.

"This lovely description will do much," said the lawyer; "but it is usual in advertisements of this nature to mention clothes. Is your ladyship aware what clothes the unfortunate young gentleman had on upon this disastrous night."

"No, I am not; but it will be easy to inquire. Though poor Mr. Yates has disappeared with him, the nurse, who is still at my mother's—stupid! I quite forgot to send for her—can give us every particular of this sort.

Let her be fetched instantly. When you have given directions as to this, I will see you again. There are many things, I know, which will require immediate attention—things which my dear lord confided to me during our last conversations, and particularly begged of me not to neglect.

"I had forgotten all that," she said, passing her hand over her forehead; "but your presence reminds me that there is much that is pressing to be arranged as regards this property, and which, though you are employed upon what I so earnestly and impatiently desire to see done, must be looked into without delay. I will endeavour to collect my scattered thoughts, and inform you of certain things which my dear lord looked upon as urgent, being important to the security of others, and of some matters of business connected with the estate. Had poor Mr. Yates been here, there would have been no difficulty. My lord told me that he had the threads of all these matters in his hands, but the change of circumstances will make—will make— I will try to remember all about it, whilst you are engaged in what I ask of you."

"Business!—affairs connected with the estate!" muttered Mr. Saxston, half audibly. "Would it not be better, my lady, to postpone such things until the arrival of Mr. Gorhambury?"

"The arrival of Mr. Gorhambury! And who, pray, sent for Mr. Gorhambury?"

"I understand that he is hourly expected. The express returned with the assurance that he would be here as soon as it was possible. Indeed, Mr. Gorhambury had already started in a post-chaise and four when the man left G."

"This *is* news to me, Sir!" said Lady Aylmer, coldly. "And pray, may I ask, were you so obliging as to send for Mr. Gorhambury before communicating with me?"

"Oh dear, no, Lady Aylmer! how could I presume?"

"Then who did?"

"I believe, poor Willmore; he really was so frightened and put about, what with the lamentable events which had occurred, and what with your ladyship's most unfortunate illness and incapacity to give orders, that he naturally thought the best thing to do was to send for

Lord Aylmer's nearest relation and next heir, and so discharge his responsibility upon him."

"Nearest relation! next heir!"

Her countenance became suddenly overcast.

For the first time the uncertainty whether her son yet lived assumed a new form. She had, in her grief at the loss, never till now adverted to the consequences of his death. It had seemed to her that her incredulity on this point—her conviction that he lived—was a matter which concerned herself alone. Alas! now, it appeared to her far otherwise. More interests were involved in the event. Her intense persuasion, her unwavering convictions, would avail her nothing. What, if she could not *prove* that her son lived? What, if the evidence which appeared to her so conclusive, should have as little weight with the world in general, as it had among her own servants? What would her passionate asseverations avail? The prospect became dark; yet amidst all that darkness, her own faith wavered not. She knew that she should find her child again; but how would it be? when? where? how?

She was silent for some time; then a ray of light broke over the prospect; and with a countenance radiant with newly-awakened hope, she turned to the attorney, and said:

"It lies with *you* to prove the fact of the child's death, before his inheritance can be wrested from him by another."

A light seemed to flash into the attorney's brain too, at these words; he started, then recollected himself, and said, quietly and sadly:

"I am afraid the proof is more complete than your ladyship is willing to admit. No rational creature can doubt that the child perished with the steward in the waters."

"I do not admit it—I never will—I never shall. To my grave I shall carry the conviction that my child is living at this very moment."

A slight smile passed over the attorney's lips.

"I understand you," she cried eagerly; "you mean that this conviction of mine will be of no avail as regards others—be it so."

She stopped, fixed her eyes, sharpened by all a mother's intelligence, upon the attorney—eyes, that looked as if they would search his soul.

"You are acquainted, perhaps, with Mr. Gorhambury?" she said at length.

"Slightly."

"You have known him before, it seems?"

"We have met once or twice."

"You are—to cut the matter short—his friend, perhaps?"

"That would be too great an honour to assume to myself."

"Thank you, Sir; I will not trouble you with the execution of the commission I confided to you just now. My views are altered. Let me not take up more of your time; I wish you a good morning."

"Nay, Madam," assuming an offended air, "if you doubt my honour—if, because I have the privilege to know and to respect Mr. Gorhambury, you doubt the sincere interest I take in everything that concerns yourself, you do me injustice—you do me great injustice, Madam."

"Poor creatures, so heart-distracted as I am, are but too apt to be unjust. Forgive me, Sir. I throw myself upon your candour."

And her hand laid hold of the bell-pull.

She rang it with emphasis, though not with violence.

"Good morning, Sir; I am sorry to have taken up your time. Letty," as the maid opened the door, "show Mr. Saxston down stairs."

CHAPTER V.

THE two men sat together in what had been the young Lord Aylmer's room of business; not his library, which was a spacious apartment, very magnificently fitted up, and filled with costly volumes; it having been left so by the late lord, a proud man, and fond of ostentatious expense. A strong contrast in this, as in many other things, with his single-minded son.

The library was, in truth, a very fine room, of grand proportions, finely ceiled and ornamented, with the book-cases only too richly carved and gilded, the tables only too beautifully inlaid and painted, the bindings of the

books only too rich and splendid; a room for display, not use, with its crimson velvet and vast chairs, its carpets and stoves, and so on. The chamber in which these two men were sitting was small and simply furnished, with everything in it for use, and nothing for display, filled with the records of a good and useful life: a life such as that of this young nobleman, cut off thus in his prime, had been. There was a table of considerable size, covered with papers, tied up and docketted; his own desk upon one side of it; and the desk of Mr. Yates, who often laboured with him in works of mercy, upon the other.

Lord Aylmer had been the encourager of every plan for improving and civilizing the semi-barbarous neighbourhood in which he lived, and in all his schemes for the public good was most strenuously supported by Mr. Yates.

Perhaps that gentleman, who was of a somewhat stern and uncompromising, though most righteous nature, might be inclined to strain matters a little too far, where the punishment of vagrancy, idleness, petty depredations, and

such like delinquencies were concerned. He had been brought up in a rigid school of morals—he hated vice, and detested profligacy and disorder. Even positive crime was to him almost more tolerable than the gross dissoluteness of habit which characterised too many of the people around him. Therefore, when he pounced upon any one offending, in those minor matters, which he felt assured were the introduction as well as the incentives to greater disorders, Mr. Yates was, perhaps, inclined to deal rather too harshly with the culprit. At least, so thought the common people; and whilst they adored Lord Aylmer for the sweetness of his manners, the liberality of his habits, and the generous regard he showed to their best interests—they detested the steward, to whom they attributed every act of severity, however necessary or called for it might be, feeling assured that the young Lord, uninfluenced, would never have brought himself to decide upon it. In which opinion they were mistaken; for Lord Aylmer, though of a more lenient temper than Mr. Yates, knew well that to rule with a slack and negligent

hand, is one of the greatest injuries a superior can inflict upon his dependants. But this by the way.

Both were now gone to their account. The young nobleman cut off by sudden illness, the steward lost on that terrible night.

The two men, or gentlemen rather, for it was no other than Mr. Gorhambury and Mr. Saxston, who now occupied their places, sat together and discoursed in this very room where those so different had so few days ago consulted. Oh! how was the very spirit of the place changed.

They discoursed not in the cheerful tones which had sounded in that chamber, when men were occupied with schemes for the benefit of others, with pleasant projects for the promotion of industry and improvement, and with bright prospects of progressive good.

No—these sat, their heads bent over the table, talking in low tones, scarcely audible even to each other; and this is what they were saying.

"The lady seems invincibly persuaded that the child lives," the lawyer had been observing;

"and perfectly irrational as is the idea, and as such, discarded by every other living being, still this intimate persuasion may offer considerable difficulties to the arrangement of the late Lord Aylmer's affairs."

"You call it intimate persuasion, conviction, and so on," said Mr. Gorhambury, rather impatiently. "I should rather call it obstinate determination to cling to a position, and hold fast a property, to which she cannot now have the shadow of a claim."

"I wish I could see it exactly in that light," replied Mr. Saxston; "but, upon matters of importance like this, it is always my habit to deliver my impressions, however unpalatable; and I am sorry to say, that in matters of this nature, the strong, sincere convictions of one mind, will often produce an almost infectious influence upon the minds of others. And, I am persuaded that it is with a sincere conviction, and not the affectation of it to serve a purpose, that we have to do here. The mother's heart is a strong thing, it will cling tenaciously to hope—even to the impossible, as it appears to others—and that with an energy of persuasion

which sometimes ends in affecting the opinions of the most incredulous. I declare to you, Sir, upon my honour, absolutely convinced as I am that the child is drowned, convinced of this fact as every reasonable creature must be, still whilst Lady Aylmer was passionately repeating her own convictions, I could scarcely keep myself from being moved by them."

At this, Mr. Gorhambury lifted up his large, dark, hard eyes, and fixed them upon the speaker with an expression in which displeasure and astonishment were almost equally mingled. The few words he uttered were:

"If such be the bent of your mind, you are not the man for me."

"I beg your pardon; you altogether misconceive the drift of my argument. I only intended to say, that if such an effect could by possibility be produced upon me, who am as *certain* the child is drowned as if I had seen it, what may we not have reason to apprehend, should the poor lady persist in her incredulity, and offer obstructions to your obtaining possession of that, which by all laws divine and human, is now your own."

"Pooh!" said Mr. Gorhambury, with some contempt, "what could she do? The child is dead. It is evidently her interest to retain possession—as she seems pretty much determined to do—but this is so palpably and evidently absurd, that I cannot have a moment's apprehension upon the subject."

The lawyer seemed to put on his considering-cap, and after twisting his mouth and pulling his face into every conceivable wrinkle which would demonstrate profound thought, he said:

"The case is a new one. I am not aware that any such has occurred before; but I will consult my books—I will consult my books—"

"And supposing it were a new one, as you say," replied Mr. Gorhambury, with a good deal of acerbity of tone, "can that make any difference? Why, an heir might be kept out of possession to all eternity in this way, by a foolish and envious woman. Absurd! The child is lost, drowned, or otherwise made away with; what matters it? The child is gone, and I remain the undeniable heir. Besides, who is to oppose me? I am in possession now, and

upon what principle on earth can I be disturbed?"

"I don't know what the means, or powers may be, which Lady Aylmer possesses for establishing the claims of her son; but of this fact I feel assured—her persuasion that he still lives is so intimate, that I am convinced every obstruction she can make, will be made."

"She had better take care, she had better look well, before she involves herself in a fruitless contest of this kind. My dispositions at present are very friendly towards her. She may be more dependant upon them than she is aware. The exact conditions of her marriage settlement I am ignorant of; but I know the old lord set himself violently against the match, and, as I heard at the time, made a very slender provision for his future daughter-in-law."

"But I fancy the young lord rectified this by his will. At least, from a few words dropped by Lady Aylmer just now—when, upon a second interview, I carried her the advertisement I had drawn up, and ventured upon some representations, as to the large sum of five thousand pounds reward—telling her that, as it was

offered by herself alone, she might be called upon to be answerable for the whole—she only replied: 'Have no uneasiness upon that score, my dear Lord Aylmer has taken good care that I shall never want for five, nor for ten thousand pounds.'"

"No will, however, has been found—for, as my most sacred duty demanded, I have made every inquiry upon the subject. Old Willmore could only tell me, that if there was a will, it was made, he doubted not, by Mr. Yates, who was a lawyer by profession, and was accustomed, it seems, to draw up legal documents for his master."

"Ten to one then, even should the will be found, that it will prove not worth a rush," said the attorney, turning up his nose. "Old women's nostrums, and lay law — much the same thing—much the same thing."

"But you forget, Mr. Yates was a lawyer by profession."

"Does not much help the matter; and yet I own I wish there may be no will, for the lady, if she have money, may manage to give us a good deal of trouble."

"As how? explain."

"Does Mr. Gorhambury forget
closer to him and looking him ste
face, "the damning fact, that the
not been found."

"How could it, when it has no
swept into the sea?"

"Ay, ay, not the slightest doc
fact: but the evidence, the poin
how far the death can be considered
as to convey the property to the
when the body has not been found,
question."

And again he puckered up his face
conceivable wrinkle.

"I wish the body could be found."

"So do I, with all my heart, as
only possible way that suggests itself
solving the difficulty. For," added
lower and confidential tone, taking h
Gorhambury by the arm, a familia
that gentleman somewhat proudly
"that the testament will turn up so
other, I have no doubt; and, if th
power given by it—which I doub

considerable degree she has—the trouble she may give will be infinite. I don't see my way through it—I don't see my way through it, unless the body could be found."

"Is it utterly out of the question, that the body may yet be found?" asked Mr. Gorhambury. "Only three days have elapsed. The search being entrusted to servants most probably was negligent—"

"I think it is not impossible that the body may *yet* be found," said the lawyer significantly.

Mr. Gorhambury suddenly lifted up his eyes: a rapid glance of intelligence was exchanged between the two men—a glance which Mr. Gorhambury could not but understand, though he tried hard, then, and thenceforward, and to the end of his days to forget it—but he could not. He dropped his eyes as hastily as he had raised them, and Mr. Saxston went on.

"The lady has offered five thousand pounds for the production of the living child. Are you inclined to give as much for that of the body of the dead one? I don't mean," he went on, observing Mr. Gorhambury change colour;

and, from the sudden flush of dark red which had suffused his cheek and temples, when their eyes met, turn black and pale. "I don't recommend that such a reward, should be published in the open manner Lady Aylmer is doing. But might I be assured—am I at liberty, privately to assure any man, *sub rosâ*, that five thousand pounds, will by you be paid down, to be divided in equitable shares, among all, and any, who may be instrumental in discovering the child's dead body?"

"Ye-es—ye-es—you may—" in a smothered half-inaudible tone.

Mr. Saxston turned aside, took up pen and paper, and hastily wrote a few words.

"Then Mr. Gorhambury will, perhaps, sign this. I do not," he went on, as he held the paper in his hand, "all that is sacred forbid that I should ask Mr. Gorhambury to put his name to any paper, that can in the least degree compromise his high and holy character or calling. This paper, even if produced—and I swear solemnly never to produce it—could not [redacted] the slightest imputation upon his [redacted] and fairness. Every man in his

circumstances, must be most anxious to have the mystery cleared up, and, in taking possession of an estate like this, to be assured that he is not wronging a living child. What can be more natural, what more right, than such a manner of thinking."

"Then why not do it openly?" muttered Mr. Gorhambury.

"Because it might have a bad effect; because, if it come to a jury—which sooner or later, if the lady have the means, rest assured it will—it might have a bad effect, it might discredit even the identity of the body. Lady Aylmer would not believe, even if she saw the body drawn out of the water, changed and discoloured as it must be—"

Mr. Gorhambury began to look sick and disgusted.

"All I mean is," continued Mr. Saxston, "that with such a determination to oppose as I fear we shall find in Lady Aylmer, a question might be raised, *even* if the body—which I hope and believe it will yet be—were produced. And she might bring the matter to a jury; and in that case, it strikes me that it

would not look well for the heir-at-law to have put forth an advertisement, and offered a reward of this description; a proceeding which the mother had judged to be unnecessary—nay, undesirable: these are my reasons. Will Mr. Gorhambury sign the paper?"

Mr. Gorhambury took the pen which the attorney presented, but he still hesitated.

"If that paper is signed," said the lawyer, "I will engage that the body will be found; and," he added, in a low tone, "if there be no will, Mr. Gorhambury is established in his rights at once. Sign, Sir, and trust the rest to me."

I have seen the signature: it put me in mind of that of Guy Fawkes under pressure of the torture, so rough and unsteady was the hand-writing. The paper was signed, however, and without turning his head towards him, Mr. Gorhambury reached the paper to the solicitor, who thereupon rose, and immediately left the room.

Mr. Gorhambury could not rest that night.

It was past midnight, and the whole of the castle was profoundly still. Deep sleep, the sleep of sorrow and exhaustion, had fallen upon all the domestics; relieved, by the arrival of one asserting authority among them, from their perplexities and anxieties. For those who are accustomed to be directed, and to obey others, seem to lose the faculty of going alone, and acting for themselves in emergencies; they are lost and bewildered, when there is no longer a controlling hand.

So one and all of the household, who had been unable to rest in peace for the three preceding nights, now wearied out, and heavy with sadness and grief, slumbered profoundly. Even poor Lady Aylmer slept. The doctor had given her a sedative draught, without her knowledge, indeed; for she, impressed with the importance of the crisis in which she stood, would have wished, though at the cost of a sleepless night, to preserve her faculties alive for reflection. The medical man, however, judged differently, and a pretty considerable dose of morphine had triumphed alike over grief and anxiety.

Everybody slumbered but Mr. Gorhambury; but he had murdered sleep.

What he had done—the recollection of that glance from the attorney, clung to him with the tenacity of the fatal garment: he could not shake it off. Fain would he have satisfied himself with the assurance that it was fancy, unfounded, simple weakness, nervous agitation; that the man was an honest man: that he never thought or intended wrong.

It would not do. The instinct within insisted that wrong was intended, some deception, some trick, to say the least of it.

Well, and if there were a little deception practised, that vile casuist which is the devil's advocate within a man's breast began to say, well, and if there were, nothing worse is intended than to prove a fact which has unquestionably taken place, and establish a right without controversy in the eyes of the law, which is already fully established in *foro conscientiæ*, in the eyes of all just and reasonable men. Mr. Gorhambury could not have been a member of his sacred profession so long without possessing an enlightened conscience so far as the percep-

tion of what was right or wrong went; but alas! for him, he had unholy hands, and a seared and hardened heart. He could not have indulged his pride, and his covetousness, and his love of this world so many years, whilst pronouncing condemnation upon them every Sunday, without having lost all the vitality of the moral sense, all the purity and singleness of the will. Every day of his life had been a covert breach of his Christian profession; but enough of the memory of what was right remained to render him an uncomfortable, though an unsoftened sinner.

To do him justice, however, it must be acknowledged that his conviction of the death of the child was as complete as conviction could be. We are all easily to be persuaded the way our interests incline. The mother could not be more determined in her unbelief, than was Mr. Gorhambury in his certainty, that the child had perished, and that he was the rightful owner of this large property, long and enviously coveted.

To have his title disputed, and upon such vague and unsatisfactory reasons, on account of

difficulties—he could not, and would not call them doubts—which might never by possibility be cleared away; to have this fine property fall into the clutches of the law, and be finally swallowed up in the interminable labyrinths of Chancery, might have been enough to vex many a better man.

He was dissatisfied, little delicate as was his mind, with what had passed; and yet when he asked himself whether he would retract the consent, I have spoken of, bluntly answered, what could he have done better?

Whom did he wrong? Whom did he defraud, but a set of hungry lawyers who would have fastened like vultures upon this rich inheritance, by thus allowing Mr. Saxston—to do what? Obtain evidence—fair, undeniable evidence of the child's death.

Well, what harm is there in that? persisted the demon within. And then he managed, as it were, to distend himself so as to hide what Mr. Gorhambury knew was to be hidden—namely, the certainty he himself felt, that it was by unconfessed means that Mr. Saxston intended to carry his point.

So thus dissatisfied with himself, nervous, restless, uneasy, his conscience tormenting, and doubts and fears invading him on every side, Mr. Gorhambury kept walking up and down his room.

Suddenly, a new and more horrible thought presented itself. The Lady Aylmer! What if she should after all possess the means? what if she should still persevere in her incredulity, take legal measures to disprove his evidence, and discover — Expose him! disgrace him, perhaps! Oh, how he wished now that he had stood firm against Mr. Saxston's persuasions: then that paper!—the damning evidence of that paper glared like a spectre before his eyes! How could he have been so mad, so infatuated, as to trust such a document in the hands of one of whom he thought so meanly —so ill?

The irritation of his anxiety became intolerable. In such temperaments as Mr. Gorhambury's, irritation once excited, is apt to mount to a degree perfectly insupportable. Unrepressed and unsoftened by the influence of higher and better feelings, to be vexed, as it

is called, at one's self, drives the patient half mad.

The room seemed to stifle him. He opened the door; it led into a large corridor overlooking the hall and running upon three sides of it, into which the doors of the several bed-rooms opened. Upon the side exactly opposite to the one in which he now stood was the late Lord Aylmer's room.

The young nobleman was lying there in a sort of state. The day had been too hurried and busied with many things for Mr. Gorhambury as yet to have visited the remains of his young kinsman. A sudden impulse led him to resolve upon doing it now.

I do not know how it was, whether he felt as if there might be something in the aspect of death to calm the agitating contentions of his spirit; or whether it were a sudden wish and curiosity to see one whom he had rarely seen, and to whom, by the very circumstance of being his heir, he now felt bound by a sort of close and peculiar tie—I know not and it matters not.

A moment he paused. He stood there with his candle in his hand, irresolute. Then he

looked down into the dark, dim hall, filled with various trophies of hunting or of war, and where the banners of departed worthies were hanging in a sort of sullen pomp.

The great hall clock went tick-tack, tick-tack, measuring unheeded time. Not a sound was to be heard. The profound, the intense weight of utterly unbroken silence pressed upon him, and a sort of mysterious horror crept over his spirit. But by a sort of infatuation, this very horror seemed to draw him towards the chamber of death. He crept stealthily along the corridor, reached, and laid his hand upon the door of death's chamber.

He listened before turning the lock—all was quite—quite still. He opened the door, and the solemn aspect of death was before him. The bed upon which the coffin lay, was an antique bed with heavy, green velvet curtains, sweeping, and indeed lying in heavy folds upon the floor. Plumes of feathers crowned the angles of the cornices ; upon the mattress was spread a velvet pall which, ornamented with the escutcheons of the deceased, swept the floor. On this was placed the open coffin covered with

black velvet, richly ornamented, and lined with white satin, and a fine sheet of fair linen concealed the form within. The room was lighted with huge wax tapers, which threw quite a blaze upon this dark furniture of death.

A door at the other end of the apartment was open. It led into another chamber, which had indeed been Lady Aylmer's dressing-room; and here the attendants in charge, some upon sofas, and others in arm-chairs, might have been seen in different attitudes of repose, and all fast asleep.

Mr. Gorhambury was not a man of an imagination easily affected, yet there was something in the profound stillness of the scene, the funeral array—the blazing lights—living lights blazing there all alone, around the dead, like living lamps in a sepulchre, which struck him forcibly; and with noiseless steps, and something like reverence and awe in his aspect, he approached and lifted up the sheet, to gaze upon the face of the dead. There it lay in its breathless impassibility, that waxen mysterious image, which at once is and is not—he who has been.

The beautiful countenance of Lord Aylmer lay there white as the sculptured marble upon a tomb, his fair hair flowing round it, his features displayed in all their exquisite proportions, wrapt in what appeared a sort of extatic repose.

He looked upon him—that hard, worldly, interested, heart-seared man, looked upon him with a sort of envying wonder. Would his end be like this? Would he repose in this tranquillity of the blessed? Would he when, in his turn, he lay, perhaps upon that very bed, and in that very state, would his face, be, as it were, an earnest of a world of just men made perfect, where the blessed dwell?

Thoughts akin to these rarely visited this world-hardened man; but they came now, with a sort of sad solemnity; and something softer, better, purer, seemed to allay the vexation of his labouring spirit.

So he stood; and, oh; divine influence of the

chamber of death, at last his knees began to bend. An inclination rare, rare with him—churchman alas! as he was—stole over him: his better angel seemed to whisper, and he was sinking into the attitude of secret prayer, when alas! alas! as his foot moved the heavy fold of the velvet curtain, a something white —a paper—two or three papers—caught his eye.

They seemed to have been shuffled together under the bed, by those who had cleared the room. It was a trifling circumstance enough; but a slight one can divert the thoughts of those so little accustomed to the higher influences as was Mr. Gorhambury. He paused, and was restored at once to his old world of, as he thought, *realities*. After a moment, he stooped down to take up the paper. It was an opened letter upon which he first laid his hand. A canal report, or something of that nature: he let it fall. Then seeing that its appearance disfigured the solemnity of the apartment, he pushed it with his foot under the velvet valance. As he did so, he inadvertently struck out the end of

another folded paper. Oh! why — why? He never knew why: it was his fate—his destiny.

Every accident is fate, is destiny to the man who has not virtue and constancy of will enough to carve out his own. His fate, his destiny, impelled him to stoop—to draw out the fatal paper. It was the will.

Lord Aylmer, on that day when he lay dying, had, in his desire to set his house in perfect order before his departure, requested his wife to bring the will, that he might glance over it again. Satisfied with the examination, and wishing to make no change, he had laid it upon a table that stood by the head of his bed, and which was nearly covered with various papers and open letters. In the confusion and distress of the subsequent night, these papers had been disregarded. When the men came to arrange the coffin and the bed, the table had been carelessly removed: some of the papers had been carried with it into the next room; others had fallen upon the floor, and had been kicked by one of the

undertaker's men out of the way under the bed.

And thus the will got into Mr. Gorhambury's hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE prayer which had been rising to the frail man's lips died away, and with it every better aspiration which the view of the dead body of the young and beloved Lord Aylmer had excited. His thoughts, like a relaxed and unstrung bow recovering its natural form, flew back to the world, and to what he considered as its true realities, in a moment. The will! Yes—there was no doubt of it; it was the will of the late Lord Aylmer which he held in his hand, and with it consequences the most weighty and far-extending. His first thought was only that of sudden surprise at having discovered the

important document in this unexpected way, and his first impulse the honest and natural one, to call up the sleeping attendants from the other room, and immediately transmit the paper to Lady Aylmer.

The temptations of the devil may be compared to the insinuating of a wedge. A small, almost undiscernible breach is made in the integrity of a man's heart; gradually, and almost insensibly, the breach is widened, till the adversary, all successful, no longer keeps terms, but hammers and drives away, and the whole moral being is shivered into irretrievable ruin.

First, Mr. Gorhambury thought there was no immediate occasion for haste. He would himself deliver the will in the morning. It would be a gracious way of introducing himself to Lady Aylmer, whom he had not yet seen. Then the idea stole over his mind that it might be as well the will were not at present seen in his hand. One of the sleepers in the next room might awake—might now be awakened—might be watching him. He glanced at the open door with a suspicious, nervous eye; but there was

nothing to apprehend, as he thought, in that quarter. From the place where he sat he could discern no one; consequently, he argued that no one could see him. So he rose up, put the will within the breast of his coat, folded it closely over, and then, like a thief and a criminal, with a step stealthy as that of Macbeth when about to commit the murder, already guilty in thought, he stole out of the chamber of death, as completely a slave to the temptations of the present life, as if death were not—as if a future were not—as if judgment on unrighteous doers was not—and as if no lesson were to be read in the great mystery he had just before been contemplating with such emotion.

He got safely and unobserved into his own room, though his hand did tremble, and the snuffers and extinguisher rattled against his silver candlestick, making a noise that seemed to him almost startling in the dead silence of the hour. He got safely back, however; and shutting his door with the utmost caution, noiselessly drew the bolt. And then the first thing he did, with a strange feeling of terror, and as if some spectre was walking behind him,

was to look under the bed—to hold up the curtains—to peep behind the bed—under the drapery of the dressing-table—into every closet and corner—once over, twice over, still holding the will under the breast of his coat; and when he had thus, at last, satisfied himself that no living creature could by possibility be there, a prey to nervous terror, he still took one other precaution. He went and examined the key-hole, but the key was upon his side of the door; then he stooped down to see that the door fitted below, at the side, above. Then he again looked behind the window-curtains twice over; he looked to be certain that no one could be gliding behind them. At last he was satisfied that no mortal eye did behold him. He sat down with an air of relief and satisfaction, and after the pause of a few minutes, took out the fatal paper.

I shall not stop to turn your attention to the practical atheism of this man's behaviour. That he be such an abject coward as regarded his fellow-creatures, and thus entirely insensible to other terrors, speaks for itself. Probably criminals are atheists of the same descr

This man professed to believe, and believed he did believe, in a God; and yet, when he had locked his door, and twice looked under and behind the bed, and twice lifted every window-curtain, and twice examined every closet and corner, he sat down secure, as if there were no other eye in the universe, to perform deliberately a base and treacherous action.

Step by step we go on!

He knew he had no business even to keep possession of the will, for an hour, far less to examine its contents; but it might be of the greatest consequence to his interests to be made acquainted with these said contents, and there could be no great harm in just looking over it!

Touch not! taste not! handle not!

So he took it out from under the breast of his coat, and, as he did so, I wish you could have seen the man. Alone as he was, what a mean, despicable, hang-dog look he had! He held it a little while, his eyes fixed upon the superscription: "The last will and testament of Claribert, Lord Aylmer." The letters began to swim before his eyes, so intently he looked upon them. Then, his hand shaking so that

the whole paper shook, he slowly unfolded it, and began to read. He had not proceeded far before his hand became more steady. He found reason, as he thought, to be very glad that he *had* read it. His conscience might not be satisfied, but his understanding was. He had done a very wise thing, in straining a point to make himself acquainted with the enemy's position. The further he read, the more he congratulated himself upon having thus become master of the facts with which he should have to contend. The weight and importance of the intelligence thus obtained seemed, to his coarse perceptions of right and wrong, in some degree to justify the means.

In short, the perusal of the will informed him, that by it Lord Aylmer constituted Lady Aylmer sole guardian of his son, and sole executrix of his will. And, in consideration, as it was stated, of her very small settlement, bequeathed to her the sum of ten thousand pounds in money, and an annuity of two thousand a year charged upon the estate. The landed property was entailed, and came to the young Claribert as a matter of course. The whole of the re-

mainder of his possessions, with the above exception, and various legacies to his dependants, was left without limitation of any sort to his son, when he should come of age, until which time Lady Aylmer was to have the entire control over it, with power to apply any part, portion, or even the whole in any manner she should think best calculated to secure her son's interests.

It appeared, however, by the tenor of the will, that in case of failure of the direct heir, by the arrangements made by the old lord in his disapprobation of his son's choice, all this large personal property would, instead of being shared by the wife, devolve to the daughters; and, in case there were no daughters, follow the same course as the land, and go to the heir-at-law. So that, except under this will, Lady Aylmer could lay no claim to any portion of it.

The amount of the property as appeared by a schedule attached to the document, was such as perfectly to astound Mr. Gorhambury: so very greatly did it exceed his expectations. It appeared that the old lord had been a good

manager, and a saving, ambitious man; for besides this great personalty, considerable estates had been purchased by him, all of which, however, were strictly entailed. The sum left to Lady Aylmer, therefore, was all that the young lord could strictly call his own; but there was a right reserved upon some of the old family property to make a settlement upon a wife, and of this to its full extent Lord Aylmer had availed himself.

The will, therefore, placed in Lady Aylmer's hands at once, both the authority and the means to dispute the question as to the right of entry of the next heir.

True, Mr. Saxston seemed to hold out the hope that *a* body might be discovered, and the death of the child be proved; but how uncertain was such proof, and what endless questions might arise under this will!

Then the inheritance! What property! what power! what dignity! what heaps of untold wealth lay almost within his grasp! were his in all equity and right; and yet, by the powers given under the will, they might be disputed, and himself, after being ruined

with the contest, be worsted at last. Such are the uncertainties of the law, and such were the real difficulties of the question. Whereas, situated as she now was, helpless and almost penniless, how could she enter into an expensive litigation, and attempt to disturb him in the possession he had obtained?

He sat there, holding the will in his hand, and perusing and re-perusing its rather singular arrangements; and the more he perused it, and the longer he looked upon that golden schedule of property, which, to do him justice, he really did believe was rightfully his own (for of course he believed, what everybody but Lady Aylmer believed, that the child was drowned) the more forcible did those casuistical arguments appear to him which the demon within kept urging.

The reflection that finally settled the matter with him was this: he should inflict no injury upon Lady Aylmer. True, he had reason, he thought, to look upon her as his enemy; but what of that? He would act by her in the most strictly honourable and liberal manner. Probably she might be acquainted with the dis-

positions of the will. If so, he would insist upon fulfilling them to the letter, so far as her legacy and annuity were concerned.

It was just possible she might be ignorant of what her husband's intentions had been; in that case, still more faithfully would it become him to fulfil them, to act the liberal, the *generous* part.

Yes, he would conscientiously adhere to the intentions of the young Lord Aylmer. Not but what the allowance was very large for a woman brought up with the habits and expectations of the young Lady Aylmer. But what of that? he would not wrong her of a sixpence; no, not for worlds!

He sat there considering the matter over till he really began to look upon himself as a very generous—nay, as a rather ill-used man, to have so large an annuity to pay. But it should be paid without grudging—yes, every sixpence of it.

As for destroying the will, this was beginning to assume an aspect of an indifferent action—one imperiously demanded by the circumstances, and that could, by possibility, injure

no one — nay, must prove an advantage to every one concerned, Lady Aylmer herself included, as she would thus be spared the temptation, with the possibility, of running herself into a course of endless and expensive litigation.

Indeed, altogether, the matters were so excessively complicated by this absurd will, and her absurd obstinacy, that there really was no other rational course to pursue.

It was disagreeable—certainly, very disagreeable—but what could a man do? very hard upon him, to be placed, by the unreasonable conduct of others, and the intricate involvement of circumstances, in such a dilemma. There are occasions, however, in life, when a sensible man must be able to discard, to hold himself above minute scruples.

Should *he*?

He arose from his chair irresolute. He laid his hand upon his candle—lifted it up—looked round.

Suddenly, the fire, which had been heaped up for the night, fell in with a loud noise,

startling him, and making him tremble and turn pale.

Then it burst into a blaze again, illuminating the whole room. What a large fireplace it was; and what a heap of coal the housemaid had laid on.

The opportunity! now, or never!

If he kept the will in his possession, how dangerous! If he gave it up, how ruinous! What weakness! what folly! not to dare. And after all, what was there in it? Who would be hurt by it? She should have every farthing of her annuity: she should have more, he could afford it, she should have more. Three thousand a-year! four thousand! and one of the houses to live in, if she wished it! Everything to make her comfortable and happy.

And the blaze mounts up fiercely, for a thick paper has caught fire.

It blazes up so high, that it threatens to catch the chimney. A great heap of blazing soot comes tumbling down. Heavens and earth! the chimney is on fire!

No, no—all safe.

"What a fool I was!" and he takes the shovel and sweeps down what remains of the blazing soot; and it mingles with all that remains of the ashes of the lost will and testament of Claribert Lord Aylmer.

It was done. The soot and the ashes of the paper together, almost extinguished the fire.

He took his candle, and looked anxiously among the embers, to see whether any vestige of papers destroyed could be detected, when the ashes should be removed the next morning.

It seemed to him that there was a good deal of the ash of burnt paper, still to be traced mingled with the soot and ashes from the grate. And the fire seemed to be going out. He must light it up again. Some wood and abundance of coal ashes being lighted again, every remnant would be consumed.

Some wood! But where was he to get wood in order to renovate the fire?

"My kingdom for a horse!"

Oh, for wood!

There was wood in a large basket standing at the end of the corridor; but he dared not leave the room for his life. He trembled at the very idea.

Within the room with the door locked he felt safe; but he would not have stepped out of it at that moment, no, not to—to—win his soul back again.

So he went prowling about the chamber, opening one closet, or drawer, and another, but they were all empty.

At last, oh, mercy! in a remote corner of the closets, he found a few bundles of the wood used by housemaids for lighting fires, which in the obscurity he had overlooked.

Oh! did he not seize upon it with transport! and did he not lay it on the ashes, and light it, and heap up with coals! and make a great big blazing terrible fire, enough to consume every vestige of his iniquity!

And then, his hands black and defiled, but not so blackened and defiled as his heart; his face scorched, his temples throbbing, the masses

of his coarse black hair all tangled in disorder; he raised himself at last from his knees before the fire-place, and stood up—that tall dark man in black—and looked!

He was startled at himself, as he saw his whole figure thrown out by the fire which blazed furiously, and reflected in a long dressing-glass, which stood opposite.

However, there was nothing more to be done. Every trace of the recent action was effaced, so he went and washed his hands; and then he was alarmed at the blackness of the water, and he was afraid that this strange blackness might excite suspicion — look odd, at least. What should he do with it? It was some time before the simple expedient of emptying the basin out of the window suggested itself. At last he bethought himself of that, and went and opened the shutter with much caution.

"How is it with me, when even a noise appals me!"

He was much afraid lest any one should hear him undoing the shutter, at that strange hour of the night. However, he was managing to effect it without noise, when suddenly, the bar

fell with a dreadful clatter. He stopped—listened—his heart beating up into his throat, but all was quiet. He unclosed the casement, and then he looked out into the night—the still, holy night.

> "Oh, holy night, with what pure dignity
> Walk'st thou thy vigil through the stilly air."

There was no moon; but a slight frost had rendered the stars peculiarly brilliant, and there they shone forth in all their spangled hosts; glittering and shining over the wide cope of the universe! Telling of majesty, of vastness, of infinity!

And he stood a moment, awe-struck before the calm grandeur of the scene—of star-spread heaven above, and dim glimmering, wide-extended earth beneath. Awe-struck, and his heart rising and expanding—even *his* heart expanding, before the majestic silence. Even *his* heart! swelling to Him, the great author of all this mighty vision—Him! his God! Shall *he* find him? It was but the delusion of a moment. The thought of what he had done—of what he was—suddenly came over

him, and the miserable man sank down upon his knees, bent his head upon his low, outspread hands—miserable, miserable man—and wept. But sad feelings are soon exhausted. No blessing fell upon those tears, wrung from him by the sudden emotion of the moment: there was no true compunction, no availing penitence in them!

In a few seconds Mr. Gorhambury had risen again, had fetched his wash-hand basin, emptied it—carefully holding it far out, so that not a trace of his having done so should remain on window-sill or wall—and then he closed the window, and the shutters, and dropped the curtain, and left the holy and beautiful night to walk out her vigil alone. Whilst he, taking out his watch, and perceiving that by this time it was three in the morning, was seized with a fresh terror, lest anything should happen, and he should be found watching. So he cast off his clothes in a great hurry and hastened into his bed, and there he lay in a strange confusion of thought, half-asleep, half-awake, wearied and exhausted—his recollection be-

coming confused and dreamy, yet retaining the impression in every change of thought, that something or other terrible had happened, and that he was an altered man.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT night another man, still meaner and more contemptible, was busied upon the affairs of Mr. Gorhambury, or rather, upon his own.

Five thousand pounds! What an immense sum that appeared to his imagination! He would have bartered his soul for it. But he was not going to peril that article at all, as he thought. Mr. Saxston possessed a very accommodating conscience, and easily argued himself into the conviction, that the deceit he was resolved upon practising, was the most innocent little contrivance in the world—such as would benefit everybody concerned, and himself in particular.

So, after leaving the apartment in which he had been closeted with Mr. Gorhambury, he walked forthwith to the stables, and taking out his horse, mounted that most quiet of four-footed creatures, and took his way, pondering, as the animal fell into its usual jog-trot pace, upon the means of carrying his purposes into execution. Mr. Saxston had a cool, clear head of his own, and he soon arranged the business to his mind, and laid out his plan of proceedings.

The first object was to ascertain, by his own most careful personal search and examination, that the real body of the lost child was nowhere to be found: the second, that the reward offered by Lady Aylmer did not produce the astounding effect of causing the little boy to be brought forward alive. There seemed no possible conceivable reason, if the child were actually living—a matter that appeared quite incredible—why he should not already have been produced. Even before the offer of so large a reward, every one must have felt sure from the well-known liberality of Lord and Lady Aylmer, that any one bringing

lost son must be largely recompensed. Mr. Saxston, therefore, made himself pretty certain that nothing would result from Lady Aylmer's exertions, and that the child, alive or dead, would never appear again. The body, he made little doubt, had been swept by the torrents of that fatal night, far out to sea. If so heavy a corpse as that of the steward—and no one doubted for an instant that *he* had perished—could have been thus swept away, how much more might the remains of a little child, between three and four years old, be carried down? A few days would settle the matter as regarded the production of the living child. If he did not appear very soon, most certainly he would never appear more. It was necessary to Mr. Saxston's plan that four or five additional days should elapse before he discovered the body; he had, therefore, plenty of time before him.

The river in which the catastrophe had happened took its rise in the mountains, upon the skirts of which the large hereditary domain of the Aylmers lay; and after traversing a tract of desolate moorland, at times hidden by the almost impervious thickets which

clothed its banks, and now dashing between scarped precipices and forming cataracts over broken rocks, made its way to the large river, or rather estuary, which is seen upon the western side of our island. The torrent was, from the nature of its course, liable to great swells when heavy rain fell, or the snow melted upon the hills; but such a sudden rise as that which had taken place upon the fatal night in question had not been known within the memory of man. A water-spout, it was supposed—and, indeed, this proved to have been the case—had fallen in the mountains some little distance from its source, and had poured forth this sudden deluge of waters.

The evening was not yet closed, but the sun was sinking towards the west, when Mr. Saxston rode out of the stable-yard at Castle Avon. Heavy clouds hung over the western sky, and the short rays shed a yellow glory beneath, showing forth the varied outline of the peaked mountains; the lowlands being already darkened with shadow.

He turned his horse's head towards the desolate track, and pursued his way to the ford.

The first thing he did, when he arrived there, was to dismount, fasten his horse to a tree, and set about a most rigorous examination of the spot. He found that the tracks of the horse's feet, which had been seen the first night upon the steep, miry ascent, leading directly from the ford, had been all obliterated, or were so mixed with various others as no longer to be distinguished. Since the waters had subsided, the use of the ford had been resumed, and the country people had again betaken themselves to the old road, traversing this desolate track by the shorter way, which spared them so many miles.

At this moment, however, as he gazed upon the rocky bed of the river, broken into deep and dangerous pools—deep and dangerous even when the river was at the lowest—and full of broken rocks and stones; and from thence, upon the long extent of brown undulating moorland, which lay at the foot of the frowning mountains beyond, nothing could be more intensely solitary than the scene. Not a single traveller could be descried upon the long line of road that lay stretched out before him—for this bank of the river was high, and commanded the other—

and not a sound broke the deep silence, save the cry of a hawk which was whirling its flight above his head, and the low twitter of some reed birds near the river's brink.

He felt almost appalled by this profound silence and solitude, and uneasy thoughts began to enter his head. He kept glaring frequently at the dark, choked-up thickets upon each side of him, almost expecting some wild and ferocious face to appear among the branches.

This part of the country had not, indeed, the best of characters. What between gipsies, smugglers, and footpads, people were not very fond of traversing it after nightfall. It was, however, quite light still, being nearly an hour before sunset; so Mr. Saxston endeavoured to shake off his lugubrious feelings, and to proceed in his search.

He first carefully examined the road; nothing was to be learned from that. Then he went down to the river's brink, and peeped about among the rocks and stones, equally in vain. Then he walked some little way over the rough and difficult ground which the flood had lately covered, and from which it had retired. And at last, wearied out with the fruitless

search, he returned to the place where he had left his horse.

He did not immediately mount, but kept peeping about the thicket, as if he expected to find something therein. At last, he espied the little winding, intricate path, to which I have adverted before, and made his way between the branches for a few paces; but it looked so dismal, so close, so dark, so impervious, so fitted for scenes of guilt, that he did not much like to go on. He was just turning back, when, between the brambles, as if thrust in to be out of sight, he thought he saw something like the end of a bludgeon.

He felt, for the moment, almost as much startled, and almost as nervous as Robinson Crusoe, when he beheld the foot-print on the sands, and was quite as much inclined to turn his back upon the apparition, and take to his heels; but he recovered himself in a second, and well aware of the importance of getting into his possession any facts relating to this important case, he took courage, turned round, and laying his hand upon the bludgeon—for bludgeon it was—drew it forth.

He felt sick and turned pale, when he had done so. The other end of the bludgeon was steeped in blood! His first sensation was horror, the next excessive fear. A murder had been committed upon this spot! He jumped to the conclusion at once.

He began to tremble exceedingly. His craven heart was perfectly upset by the idea of being even near the scene where some bloody deed had been perpetrated, and his first impulse was to fly. He fancied the villain to whom the bludgeon belonged would start out upon him from behind the thicket, and murder him for the discovery he had made. He had heard stories, not altogether without foundation, of the vindictiveness of the gipsies who haunted these wilds; how they had been known, even years and years after the event, in manners the most cruel and horrible, to revenge themselves upon any one who had been instrumental in detecting their crimes, and bringing them to justice.

He recollected a dreadful story of this description told to him when he was a little boy, and which had haunted his imagination for years; and he fancied himself already surrounded by

grinning gipsies, putting him to death with the most horrid tortures. He was, to tell the truth, frightened out of his wits: so what did he do, but push the bludgeon into the thicket again, and so effectually conceal it that not a vestige of it was to be seen; and then, fearing to look behind him, he mounted his horse, and rode as fast as he could home.

And the faster he rode, the more frightened he felt; till he fancied he heard the hoofs of a pursuer's horse behind him. But he durst not look back: he kept urging his poor steed onwards, with whip and spur; until at last the unfortunate beast, covered with foam, and the rider quite in a cold reek with terror, they stopped before Mr. Saxston's own house, at the end of the long straggling street of the little town of Avonmore. Oh! how his heart dilated, as the hoofs of the poor animal rang upon the pavement!

He got off his horse, threw his bridle to the great lubberly boy who officiated as groom; and entering his house, crept up to his bed.

Safely there he lay, and pondered upon what he had seen; and the result of his pondering

may be briefly summed up in a few words—he resolved to say nothing about it.

He began to suspect that Mr. Yates had met with some foul play, and had been murdered, and thrown, with the child, into the stream; unless his body had been carried off, and hidden in some of the holes and corners with which that region of mountain limestone abounded. And then he recollected with horror, that Mr. Yates had certainly exposed himself to the vengeance of the gipsies; for he had, not very long before, succeeded in carrying out against them an indictment for horse-stealing; had proved his point; and in consequence two men had been transported as accessories; and one man, under the severity of the then law, hanged.

Mr. Saxston had been present at the trial, and he now recalled—what had not at the time made any great impression—the savage scowl of a wretched black-eyed hag, whose face had been suddenly pushed out from amid the crowd, as sentence was pronounced, and then as suddenly withdrawn. He remarked the look she had cast upon Mr. Yates, as he sat in the witness-

box, with an air of satisfaction at this termination of the trial; and also the clenched fist, for an instant hastily raised and shook, as the eyes of the hag fell upon him.

These things, now so vividly recollected, added to his terror and consternation, and settled him in his resolution, never to breathe a word of what he had seen, or of his suspicions, to living being.

The next day, Mr. Saxston felt himself very poorly, and staid at home and dined upon broth; but a second night, passed in good sleep, served to dispel the dismal images of the previous one, and he rose up quite a changed man. All his nervous terrors dissipated like a dream; refreshed, and ready to pursue his plans, and pocket his five thousand pounds.

Five days and nights had now elapsed since the disappearance of the child: the body, if found, must be so swollen and disfigured with lying in the water, that in all probability it would not be recognisable. But then, how was it to be identified? By its dress, to be sure.

And he suddenly slapped his hand upon his

forehead, and exclaiming: "Fool! idiot that I am! not to have thought of that before," rang the bell violently, ordered his horse out, and without waiting to swallow a morsel or breakfast, forgetful of bludgeons and of gipsies' wives, rode as hard as he could to the ford, and crossed it; rejoicing that he had as yet met nobody, for the hour was so early that not a creature was upon the road: and so he went on, and never drew bridle till he arrived at the little mountain town where Mrs. Manvers, the widow of the late incumbent, and the mother of Lady Aylmer, lived.

Time and chance happen unto all, says the wise man; and chance seems to assist the nefarious designs of the evil-doer, as well as the best-intentioned plan of the philanthropist.

Mr. Saxston had his share of good luck upon this occasion. He happened to be acquainted with the young woman who was the little Claribert's nurse, and who was rather of a superior education, and likewise remarkably pretty.

Mr. Saxston had admired her exceedingly [illegible]church, and had now and then escorted her [illegible]rds on her way to the Castle. He had

not as yet quite made up his mind whether he should so far condescend, as to offer her proposals of marriage; but the young woman, though prudent and reserved in her behaviour, had shown such an evident partiality for his company, that he had turned the matter over in his mind several times. And now, as good luck would have it, as he rode up the lane which led to Mrs. Manvers' house, feeling extremely anxious to speak with this nurse, and yet full of the absolute necessity of not being seen by any of the other servants, and casting about in his mind how he should bring this to bear, what should he see, but the well-known, somewhat coquette, cap of Mrs. Margery, peering over a hedge of sweetbriar which bordered the lane, and separated it from Mrs. Manvers' garden.

Mrs. Manvers inhabited a small cottage, prettily ornamented, and almost buried in thick ivy, cluster roses, and eglantine. It was situated at a short distance from the neighbouring little town, and was surrounded by a small, but very pretty garden, exquisitely kept in the prime taste of that day. This, with a small annuity, was all the mother could be persuaded

to accept from Lord Aylmer, when he married the beautiful daughter of a forlorn and needy widow. She had desired to remain where she had been born, and where she had lived and married, in her original obscurity, surrounded, as she said, by her own people. Her greatest pleasure on earth was to receive a visit from her little grandson; who was, she declared, and with truth, one of the most beautiful and remarkable children that ever was seen.

The young Claribert was, indeed, a most lovely, intelligent, and spirited child—bold, active, and independent. Digging in Mrs. Manvers' garden; riding her great house-dog; teazing the cat; hunting the kittens; rattling his carts unmercifully over her head; and screaming and laughing, in the raptures of his childish joy, till her ears tingled again. Alas! that this bright promise should have been so soon cut off! But who is equal to the understanding of these things?

Mrs. Manvers, who was now very infirm, and quite unable to travel, had been so heart-broken when the disastrous news reached her, that she had taken to her bed in all the powerless despair of a weak and aged person, totally

incapable of bearing up against her sorrow. She was a good and pious creature; and she had bowed her head, and said: "It is the Lord!" but she seemed altogether too feeble in body, to bear up against the weight of this overwhelming grief. She could only patiently yield under it, and take to her bed, unable even to rise; far less to afford any assistance to her daughter.

Lady Aylmer, in truth, had so long been accustomed to pet her mother, as a being to be supported and assisted, rather than to afford support herself, that the idea of seeking aid from her in this dreadful passage of her life never suggested itself. She was almost relieved to hear that Mrs. Manvers was in her bed; but too much occupied with her own racking anxieties, and the dreadful impediment offered to free action by the seizure on her limbs, to think very much of anything but the lost child; she contented herself, with desiring Margaret to remain, and nurse Mrs. Manvers; thinking that the company of this young woman, who was rather above the common sort, might be some comfort to her mother. So Mrs. Margery was still at Woodbine Cottage, as Mrs. Manvers' abode, was, I am sorry to say, named.

Now, it happened that Mrs. Margery had been a good deal fatigued by the watching of the night before, Mrs. Manvers having been more than usually restless. It was a lovely autumn morning; and autumn though it was the flower-garden, with its china-asters, china roses, and various shrubs, fading into all sorts of yellows and crimsons, looked very tempting; so she had stepped out, and was strolling by the sweetbriar hedge when Mr. Saxston espied her.

Mrs. Margery heard a horse coming up the lane, and looked over the hedge and saw him; on which, the colour flew into her face, and she gave a little shriek of recognition. He took no notice, however, until he had looked up the lane and down the lane, and raised himself upon his stirrups, and peered over the neatly-cut hedge into the garden, and satisfied himself that there was nobody near, and then, he said:

"Good morning, Miss Margaret; and fortunate I think myself to find you out walking this lovely September morning, which — but you don't love flattery, and I will say no more. Is there a gate to the garden near here?"

"A few paces farther down," she answered; "but I beg you to excuse me, I dare not ask you to walk in. Mrs. Manvers is the most particular old lady in the born world."

"I was not wishing to come in, Miss Margaret, rather very particularly the contrary; but, what I wish, and what I come for, is, just three minutes *tête-à-tête* conversation with your dear self, which if you will grant me, we can walk down the lane together; I hanging my horse's bridle over my arm; for, indeed, I have something of the most serious importance to impart to you."

Mrs. Margery bridled and coloured; and looked this way and that; but turned and walked on towards the gate, which she opened without making the least noise, and the two were walking in the lane together.

He chose the way by which he had come, which he knew was quite solitary; and throwing his horse's bridle over one arm, and offering her the other; which she took, whilst he gently strained the hand he held to his breast, he said:

"Miss Margaret, awful events have passed

since we parted; but I hope they have not driven me out of your memory."

"Awful indeed!" she said; and she knew it was her cue to weep, so she put her handkerchief to her eye, and said: "The sweet—sweet babe!"

"Yes, poor little creature! there is an end of him and of poor Mr. Yates—both drowned; swept away into the Bristol Channel, and not the slightest trace of either of them to be discovered anywhere."

"So I heard. I assure you, Mr. Saxston, I have cried about it till my head was ready to split at times; and as for his poor grandmama, I think it will be the death of her, for she has never held up her head since."

"It is a very awful business. But now, Miss Margaret, I have something very particular to impart to you, relating to this matter. The body of neither Yates nor the poor little fellow have yet been found; but I know one who would give five thousand pounds if he could produce evidence of the child's decease, or find the body. Now, I hope the body may be found, for, the next heir being a very great

friend of mine, would prove a very powerful one in due course, if he succeeded to the inheritance, I doubt not; he it is will give five thousand pounds to the fortunate person, who might succeed in discovering the poor boy's remains. It is so long, however, since—the time of his disappearance being now nearly a week—that the poor little corpse might be too much changed to be easily identified. Pray, how was he dressed when he left you?"

"Oh, poor little thing! I put him on his warmest clothes; for I said to myself, surely it's going to be a wet night, the clouds were drawing up so. You never saw the like. I would not have had him go, poor lamb! but Mr. Yates told me my poor lord was a dying, and must see the child; and my lady would have it—so what could I do? and the dear boy himself, as soon as he heard his papa was ill, and wanted to see him, would take no refusal, but was in such a hurry to be off! I think I see him now, with his beautiful flaxen curls hanging over his sweet lily-white neck and shoulders, and his large blue eyes fixed upon his grandmama, begging to go, almost crying to do so. He was such a sensible, loving

creature; I think there never was so forward and clever, or so sweet and affectionate a child of his age before."

And here Mrs. Margery really did feel some honest, unaffected tears swelling to her eyes.

"Well—well," said Mr. Saxston, rather impatiently; "and so what had he on?"

"Why, he had on his little every-day dress of tartan; and I was for changing it, knowing as how my lady loved to see him dressed out, especially when he was to go to his papa; and I said to Mrs. Manvers—"

"Pray tell me at once, what the child wore when he went away."

Mrs. Margery looked up with an expression of mingled wonder and displeasure at this abruptness, and seemed very much inclined to be offended; which Mr. Saxston observing, he assumed the humblest air of contrition, and added:

"If you knew how very pressing this business is—how short my time, and the importance of any information you could give, not only to my own interests as regards money, but to interests far nearer to my heart; you would forgive my ill-breeding,

indeed you would. May I beg Miss Margaret to tell me what the child wore, as succinctly as she can?"

There was something in Mr. Saxston's manner, that more than ever convinced Miss Margaret, that she had an interest in the number of thousands of pounds, that Mr. Saxston might possess; so checking her natural inclination to prate, she answered, for once, to the point.

"He had on his tartan frock, and over that a warm pelisse-coat of blue cloth, embroidered with braid, of my lady's own working; and a felt hat, with a grey feather and blue ribbons."

"And his gloves?"

"Yes, a pair of odd, old-fashioned gloves, worked in blue, of my lady's own work, which he was so proud and fond of, that he insisted upon having them on, whenever he was dressed to go out."

Mr. Saxston having moved on a little, said:

"Did Mrs. Manvers, or any of the servants, see how he was dressed when he went away?"

"Well, I don't much think they did. For Mrs. Manvers had kissed and taken leave of

him before he had his coat and hat on; and then Mr. Yates was in such a hurry to be gone, that I scuttled him down-stairs, and popped him on the horse myself. No, I don't think, as it happened, that any of the servants saw him after he was dressed. Mrs. Manvers keeps only two maids, you know."

"You don't happen to have any more clothes of the same sort, belonging to the young gentleman, by you?"

"No, I have only his best black velvet coatee and his white frocks. Plenty of them, for his mamma and Mrs. Manvers, all summer-time could bear him in nothing but his white frocks; and for sure, he looked, for all the world, like a little angel in them."

"Humph! haven't got another pelisse or great coat?"

"No; oh yes! there is his common blue garden coat, what they were used to put him on, when the weather was cold. I had it with me; but as he had never worn it since we came, I forgot that, or it would have been the fitterer for such a journey with that Mr. Yates."

Again Mr. Saxston bent down his head, as if in deep thought; yet, meditative as he

seemed, he did not the less keep advancing down the lane, and drawing his companion with him. The lane led to some rough, solitary fields, and the banks and hedges upon either side were so high, that it was completely screened from observation.

When they had arrived at a most secluded spot, where the narrow lane passed between two almost precipitous banks, covered with brushwood, and nearly hidden from the sky by the bushes which shot athwart it, Mr. Saxston stopped suddenly; and turning to his companion, said:

"Time is precious; and delay may be fatal to everything. Answer me a plain question. Will you assist me to gain five thousand pounds, on condition that I make you Mrs. Saxston?"

"Oh la!—" she was beginning to colour, bridle, and make a fuss.

"Silence!" he said, with as much stern authority as if he had been her husband for ten years; "listen to my conditions. You must fetch me what I want, in the first place; afterwards you must consent to go with me where I will take you, and where we will be

married. But you must consent to live at that place, till I think it wise to bring you to my home. Many foolish young folks have made secret marriages before now to the *ruin* of their prospects. Will you consent to such for the *making* of yours and mine?"

"La, dear! only think—"

"Only think of one thing, Margaret. Will you, or will you not?"

He had a weak, tiresome, silly woman to deal with. It was some time before he could bring her to reason; but the object before him was too great, and he of too determined a character, to suffer himself to be baffled even by the silliest of silly women—creatures of all created beings the most tiresome and intractable to deal with.

Partly by blandishments, and partly by scolding, he at last brought the nurse-maid to the point he wanted. She promised to return to the house, take out a complete suit of the child's linen, a white frock, and the blue coat she had spoken of, and accompany Mr. Saxston wherever he would; which purpose she easily accomplished without being observed; for Mrs. Manvers was accustomed to lie till about ten

o'clock, undisturbed, and then to have her breakfast. The two maids were busy at their various occupations. It was not till ten o'clock, therefore, that Mrs. Margery was missed.

She was then not to be found. Neither in her room nor in the garden was she, nor in the lane, up which the cook ran, thinking that she might, as she sometimes did, have lounged out of the way.

CHAPTER VIII.

In what a state had the poor mother passed this time! Of all agonies, the horror of heart-suspense is perhaps the most hard to bear; and what a suspense was hers!

It was not the alternative between death on the one hand, and security on the other, like the harassing uncertainty of those who wait in terror for tidings of a ship which has not arrived at the time expected. One comfort, at least, the poor beating heart cannot be deprived of in that case —either the loved one is safe, or he is dead. Either way the hope is complete, or the extent of the misery is known. Oh! woe indeed,

when to be assured of the death of a beloved one, would almost be a relief.

At first Lady Aylmer had not felt the anguish of this view of the subject. She believed that her child lived, and believing so, that he would certainly be recovered; but, as she lay imprisoned upon that bed of pain, to which the contractions of her limbs condemned her, more fearful visions took possession of her mind. She still felt the most undoubted conviction that the child had not perished in the water.

But what then had become of him? Had he wandered away, poor little thing, and died miserably by inches of cold and starvation in the bushes? Or, had he—she had heard of such things, all sorts of tales about gipsies were current in that part of the country—had he been stolen away by some of those vagrant tribes, with which common report, peopled the solitudes of moors and mountains; and in that case, what would be his fate? She fancied the loving, clever child, almost preternaturally forward in intellect and affections, vainly calling to his father and his mother with those piercing shrieks of woe, which she had heard him once or twice

utter, when they two had been parted. His distress, the day she was forced to separate from him, and leave him with Mrs. Manvers still haunted her.

What must the poor little creature's agonies be now? And yet the hope that he lived was still sweet. She thought of the large reward she had offered, and felt it to be impossible that she should not recover him.

In such alternations, and racked by impatience to be well, to be able at this eventful period of her life to leave her bed, and see and act for herself in so dreadful an emergency, the heavy hours passed away. She had not yet seen Mr. Gorhambury. She felt an invincible repugnance to meeting a man always disliked by her husband, and by her husband's father, and who had, as she thought, thrust himself in a very indelicate manner upon her hospitality, at a moment when it was so evident she must wish to be alone. She was almost reconciled to her illness, when she recollected that it spared her from the necessity of enduring a presence, at that time so more than ever odious.

As for her grief at the loss of her husband, that, in the distraction of her mind, might be called almost a sweet feeling, when compared with others. So assailed and torn as she was by terror and anxiety, it was almost consoling to reflect that he had escaped; that he slept quietly where neither pain nor sorrow should reach him more; nay, better far perhaps, was even now rejoicing in those regions of celestial joy for which his spirit was fitted, watching over, and shedding a softening balm upon the lacerations of her spirit, by influences vague, yet most benign.

She had insisted upon being carried into his room, to take a last farewell of all that remained of him on earth; had kissed the marble cheek with many tears—tears which poured so fast and warm, they seemed to comfort her desolated heart. And then she had retired to her bed, to struggle with her anxiety, and endeavour to calm and compose her spirits, by resignation to the Divine will, even in this agonising hour.

So the days passed on till the funeral of Lord Aylmer took place; after which, she concluded

that of course Mr. Gorhambury would leave the Castle, she being resolved to send him no invitation to remain.

She was a creature of instincts and impulses —more, perhaps, than she ought to have been, poor thing!—and her antipathy to Mr. Gorhambury was so great, that she felt that it would be quite a relief to know that he was gone away again.

What was her surprise then, the morning after the funeral, not only to learn that Mr. Gorhambury still remained at the Castle, but to discover, that he was assuming an authority over its inmates, which could only be justified by his possessing the rights of ownership? She was startled at the intelligence; but when the first surprise was over, she began to reflect, and things presented themselves to her mind very disagreeably.

Could it be possible, that he was intending to claim the inheritance, before the death of her son was ascertained? To her, who felt so certain that the child had not perished, this appeared an act of the most unheard-of greediness and injustice.

But what should she be able to do? Sup-

posing he did put in his claim, what would the law decide? Yet so, early! Before even all possible means had been exhausted to search out the boy!

Oh! she felt that she must lie in bed no longer. If she died for it, she must be up and doing.

"I must get up, Mary; indeed, I must," she said to her maid. "Get me up and dress me. If I cannot stand, I will be supported; if I cannot walk, I will be lifted. I must lie in my bed no longer. Get me up; dress me any how. I must see and speak to Mr. Gorhambury."

"What dress? Ah, my lady!"

"What dress? My mourning weeds, to be sure. You do not think I am afraid of my black suit. Oh, Mary! Mary! when the heart is in thickest night, little matters it what we wear!"

They got her up, but under agonies of pain so great, that she could scarcely forbear from shrieking when she moved a limb; yet she was resolute. They got her to the sofa in her sleeping-room, and there she

sent to request an interview with Mr. Gorhambury.

She was kept waiting a little time before he appeared.

Beautiful, pale creature! there she lay, entirely covered with black, her lovely form hidden in a sort of cloud of crape and sables; her face only visible in a setting of white, and her hands like statuary marble, lay folded before her.

Beautiful and strange she looked! for her lips were almost as colourless and deathlike as her cheeks; and only two large eyes, still ardent and brilliant, seemed to give evidence of the life within her! So she appeared; those large eyes fixed impatiently upon the door, as it at last slowly and solemnly opened, and disclosed the tall, spectral figure of Mr. Gorhambury, clothed, like herself, in deepest mourning, and with his sallow cheek almost as pale as her own. He was a man, as I think I have said, of ill-built frame, large clumsy joints, and ungraceful, uncomely appearance; his face, from the harshness of its outline, the size of the features, and the hard coldness of his eye, singularly displeasing.

Most people he in some degree terrified as well as displeased; but Lady Aylmer was not one to be terrified by those she did not love. She had no fear of the face of man, except when that of the one she loved was clouded with displeasure. *That* she feared beyond words. She was very, very ill; faint and sick at heart, and feeble and in pain; but her high spirit deserted her not—it was aroused to its full powers by what threatened the interests of her son.

"Good morning Mr. Gorhambury," she said, with a sort of stately courtesy, as he entered the room, and started, and turned still paler, as he beheld the strange, but beautiful figure of Lady Aylmer. "I have to beg your pardon that I have played the part of hostess so ill; but my sickness and my great sorrow will plead my excuse. I should have been very sorry — deeply grieved—very much — "

"I beg Lady Aylmer will make no apologies to me," he said, in a confused, hesitating tone, a thing new in him; but her great beauty, together with the knowledge of the wrong that he had done her, appalled him. She was surprised at this appearance of timidity and irresolution in

his manner. She had been accustomed to think of him as of a man little given to that sort of infirmity; and the observation of it in some degree softened her feelings; so, abating a little of the lofty coldness of her manner, she went on:

"I ought, I know, to express my obligations to Mr. Gorhambury for so speedily visiting the Castle of his kinsman at such a mournful time as this. It was, no doubt, kindly intended, to honour by his presence the funeral of one whom all men reverenced and esteemed. I thank him for it; and I would, at any other time, beg of him to postpone his departure, and give me the honour of his company for a few days; but—but—he must excuse me; I cannot—no, I cannot."

Mr. Gorhambury seemed not to know exactly what answer to make to this speech; yet it could not pass unanswered. It brought the matter at once to a point between them, courteous as were the phrases in which its meaning might be couched. She had intended it so. She was too sore, too harassed, too excited, to brook delay. She felt that she must at

once be satisfied, as to his intentions and his claims.

"I am sorry; at another time, I hope, more hospitality—"

"Madam!"

The answer, brief as it was, aided by the tone and look which accompanied it, at once conveyed what it was intended to convey. She answered his look with one as expressive.

"I consider myself, as guardian of my son, to be the mistress of this house during his minority," she said, haughtily, raising herself up from her pillow as she spoke, supporting herself upon one arm, and turning that pale face and those lustrous eyes towards him.

"Guardian of your son!"

This look was intended now to express astonishment at her audacity, mingled with pity.

"My son is alive, Sir!"

He shook his head.

"He *is* alive, Sir! I am certain of it."

A half-contemptuous smile was suffered to steal to his lips, as he answered:

"Our wishes are evidence to no one but ourselves."

"I know it, Sir. Neither will wishes, on the other hand, prove that of which there is no evidence. Produce your proofs. I know my son came to land. There is his glove!" she cried, plucking the little relic from her bosom, and holding it up in a sort of wild triumph; "his glove! dropped from his little, precious, hand; and the glove was *dry*. It had been dropped *after* the child landed. He *did* land —he lives! he is safe! But, oh, my darling! my darling! where are you?"

"And upon such evidence," said Gorhambury, coldly, "is a man to be kept for years —for your life—for his own—may be, for ever —from his just inheritance? Futile attempt!"

"We shall see that," she said, her eyes sparkling with animation. "In the meantime, as that child's guardian, and entitled by my husband's will, *which I have seen*, to exercise the right, I take leave to consider myself as mistress of this Castle, to bid and forbid here as I think proper; and it pains me to begin by a gross breach of hospitality. But under the

circumstances, I will defer the pleasure of receiving Mr. Gorhambury till a more expedient time."

"And I, Madam, take leave, under the circumstances, to say, that it is Mr. Gorhambury's intention to remain in this Castle, as its rightful owner, unless the child of Lord Aylmer can be produced to negative his claim."

"Oh, he will be produced! he will be produced! Don't fear but he will be produced. I have got to my sofa—I shall soon be on my horse; and England and Wales, and the whole empire, ay, and the world, shall be searched, and I shall find my child. Make sure of that, Sir! In the meantime, under Lord Aylmer's will, of which I know, in his great and generous confidence, he constituted me sole executrix, I shall at least exercise the rights of an executrix over his property, and—"

"No will, can give any one a claim to interfere between me and the property entailed upon me, as next heir in blood."

"No doubt, if you were the heir; but

we shall see that. In the meantime," and she laid her hand upon the bell.

A footman appeared.

"Send Willmore to me."

The old man came in.

"Willmore, there lies a thickly-folded paper —your late honoured master's will, in short— upon the table which stood by his bedside. Bring it to me. It is sealed up in an envelope of white foolscap paper, and endorsed upon the back. I want it."

Mr. Gorhambury now rose from the chair he had taken near the sofa; and going to the other end of the room applied himself, whilst apparently waiting for the appearance of the papers, to the examination of a basket of greenhouse plants, which stood near one of the windows. After that, he approached a table at some distance, and began to look over some books of prints, that lay there. The time seemed very long; the lady became impatient. She rang the bell rather sharply. Her maid appeared.

"What can Willmore be about? Tell him to come to me."

"What can you have been about, Willmore?" as the old man entered the room. "It lies upon the little inlaid table which stood by the bedside."

"Madam, the table has been removed; and I can find no such paper as you describe, anywhere."

"Who removed the table?" starting up, as if to go and search for the will herself. "Alas!" she screamed, and fell back again.

Oh! nightmare dream! Worse! horrid, horrid fetters of the body!

"Who moved the table? Who dared to move the table?"

Her hand was on the bell again, and it was pulled violently. Mary again appeared.

"Send Mrs. Hislop" (the housekeeper).

"Oh, Mrs. Hislop! Mrs. Hislop! who was it went, and—and—arranged your dear master's room? There was a table by the bedside; and upon it was laid the will. Oh me! that I never thought of it before! How careless! And Willmore cannot find the will. The housemaid must have mislaid it. For Heaven's sake! dear woman, go and inquire, make it out, find it, and bring it to me."

"Oh, my God! my God!" she cried, passionately, "what will become of me? Who will be guardian to my son? That man—that man? Oh, pity! pity! pity!—never!"

Mr. Gorhambury, upon hearing this last burst of vehement feeling, found it impossible any longer to preserve his attitude of affected indifference. It was necessary to come forwards, to say something, to do something. To preserve the appearance of indifference, which he at first had assumed, would be almost as suspicious as anything he could do.

He had been making great efforts with himself to command his nerves, whilst he had pretended to be occupied with the plants, and to still the tumultuous beating of his heart, and keep, if possible, the blood from rushing to his cheeks and temples. He had succeeded but ill; and there was a deep-red suffusion over his face, like the sullen glow of a stormy sky seen under a heavy cloud, as he turned and approached the sofa where Lady Aylmer lay.

She could not conceal her dislike and fear at that moment. She gazed upon him with [illegible] but too expressive of both. He

nearly all that her looks conveyed; and feelings of rage and revenge were rising bitterly in his heart, as he looked at her, mingled with a bad exultation at the certainty that she was in his power.

He seemed to lose that sense of his shameful crime, which had so oppressed him a few moments before, in the resentment which her distrust and dislike engendered. He was able, therefore, to speak with less agitation than he had thought possible, as, with an appearance of suppressed indignation, partly real and partly affected, he said:

"I am at a loss to conceive, what I may have done to merit Lady Aylmer's aversion and distrust to the degree she is pleased to express."

"Done! Oh, no!—it is not you; I beg your pardon. What did I say? My child! my poor, poor child!"

And she burst into tears, and lay weeping unrestrainedly for some time. It was the first regular fit of weeping in which she had indulged since the death of her husband and the loss of her boy, and she did not endeavour to restrain it, but lay there, yielding to her

sorrow, to the desolation of her love, and to the idea, ever present, of her child not drowned, but living—the victim of oppression and wrong; for, whether rightly or not, she considered the claim of Mr. Gorhambury as a usurpation of her son's inheritance; and, whether rightly or not, felt an instinctive certainty that there would be little scruple, as to the means used to secure it.

Her suspicions were so strong, her distrust of his honour and good faith so unaccountable, her terrors so almost wild, that she began to tremble for her own reason. Little aware was she how nearly her suspicions approached the truth, when they extended to a doubt whether Mr. Gorhambury, some way or other, were not concerned in the disappearance of the child. But he allowed her to shed a torrent of tears, whose abundance, as they always do upon a nervous temperament like hers, softened and refreshed her, and quieting the terrible excitement of her mind, she felt in a great measure restored to herself—to that self, so full of clear perception, just reasoning, and generous courage.

As her spirits became tranquillised, her

of the situation in which she stood was sharpened, and the necessity for calmness and self-possession seemed more imperative than ever. So she conquered her hysterical emotion, and raising her head from the pillow, looked steadily into Mr. Gorhambury's face, as if she would have read his soul. He had continued standing there before her, as if fascinated to the spot, watching her as she wept. When thus she fixed her eyes upon him, he felt his colour change.

"The will, I begin to fear, will not be found," she said at last, as steadily as she could. "Can you tell me what will be my position, should this prove to be the case?"

"Your position shall be, as nearly as *possible*," he answered with emphasis, and as if relieved, for he felt very much relieved by the question—"as nearly as possible, that which it would have been had the will been found; at least, so far as it shall be in my power to make it so."

"My position—my own pecuniary position, perhaps, you mean. I thank you, Sir, for your kind intentions," she went on, with rather a haughty bend of the head, "but I was not adverting to that. I was thinking of my posi-

tion as regarded my child. By that will, Mr. Gorhambury, I was constituted his guardian."

"Why *will* you, Lady Aylmer, afflict yourself and me with suppositions so — allow me to say it—so irrational? Why will you persist in indulging hopes, equally injurious to my just claims, and your own restoration to tranquillity? What has been—has been—the past cannot be restored, nor the dead recalled to life, struggle and resist as we may. Why will Lady Aylmer so obstinately refuse to acquiesce in the truth?"

"Only, let Lady Aylmer be assured that such *is* the truth, and she will find submission and acquiescence, doubt it not, Sir," she said boldly; "but *that* is precisely what I must be assured of. I repeat it, I do *not* believe the child has perished."

"What would convince you of it?"

"When I see my baby: then I will believe it, and not till then," she said, and her voice faltered. "Alive or dead, let me see him again, and then, and not till then, I shall be satisfied. And then, and not till then," she went on with increasing energy, "shall I be convinced that

you have a title to my boy's inheritance; and we must try, Sir, if necessary, whether the law be of the same opinion or not."

"No doubt," he said, "the law will be satisfied."

He appeared, as she thought, very well contented with this reference. She asked, hastily:

"Have you any evidence which has not reached me?"

"Not as yet," he replied; but added, "that the time was short, and the body might yet be found."

"And, identified?"

"And, identified."

And so saying he went away, with the words: "I will see Lady Aylmer again when there is anything new to communicate."

Three days after this Mr. Gorhambury asked to see Lady Aylmer again.

His stern and dark countenance was more than usually dark and lowering, when Mr. Gorhambury appeared once more in Lady Aylmer's dressing-room. She was still lying

upon the sofa, a helpless cripple, but gradually recovering the use of her limbs, and as it was hoped, her health. He sent up to request an interview, saying that he had matter of importance to communicate. An involuntary shudder passed over her as she received the message. There was but one matter of importance which could bring him into her presence again so soon. Her heart began to beat violently. She pressed her hands tightly over it, and sat half-raised, looking anxiously at the door. It opened, and the tall man, with his strangely hard but now fearful countenance, appeared. He held a small parcel of folded writing paper in his hand.

"You are come again," was all she could utter, for she was almost breathless.

He made no answer, but walking up to the sofa, put the folded paper into her hand. She opened it, and shrieked aloud:

"He has been found!"

And the paper and a lock of flaxen hair fell from her hand to the floor.

"Yes," said Mr. Gorhambury, gravely, "the body has been found."

"Oh, where? how? when? my boy!

my little boy! oh, my child! my child! let me see him. You are restored, then, my baby! but how!—let me see him! let me kiss his little cheek once more, fold his pretty hand in mine! Oh, Sir! have me carried where he is; let me see him at least! my boy! my darling boy!"

It seemed as if the certainty that she should see him again, even though dead, softened the anguish of this extinction of her hopes. To have one thus lost, again, even in any way restored, was a consolation.

"Let me see him. Where is he? where is he?"

"My dear Lady Aylmer," began Mr. Gorhambury in a faltering voice, for his heart—even *his* heart—was touched, and his bosom was heaving with unusual emotion. "Pray, do not run on in this way. Recollect, my dear lady, that it is now nearly a fortnight since the poor little boy was lost. Indeed, you must not ask to see him. I brought you this hair, and his clothes, though much discoloured by the water; it may perhaps be a poor consolation to you, to see them. I hope you will not ask for more."

"But I do, and I shall—" she said, again the prey to vague, unaccountable suspicions.

"If you insist—certainly. But I warn you that there will be no satisfaction in the sight; the water, the exposure to the elements, corruption, has done its work. But for its dress, the body could not have been identified. But, upon this subject, I have taken all the precaution you or any one could desire. The clothes were taken off, before proper witnesses—namely, the clergyman of the parish, Mr. Saxston, your old servant Willmore, and your housekeeper. Still, I would wish you to have every assurance; but I believe when you have talked with these people, you *will* be satisfied."

All this was said with considerable effort, and as if he were forcing himself to speak. She mused a little, and then she said:

"Pray send Mrs. Hislop to me. Tell her to bring the clothes."

"Certainly I will, and I hope—" and he left the room, muttering something about satisfaction, which was not very intelligible.

In a short time Mrs. Hislop appeared. The

good woman's eyes were red with weeping, and it was as much as she could do to help bursting out crying again, when she saw her lady. She entered, carrying a little frock and coat and child's linen in her hand; they were quite discoloured with the wet and the sun. The good woman kept looking at them and weeping, whilst she gave them to Lady Aylmer. The mother seized upon the relics with a sort of hungry impatience. Hastily she looked them over. Alas! she knew them but too well. The little muslin frock all decked with lace and embroidery by her own hand; the tiny shirt, the stays, and petticoat, too well remembered; above all, the blue pelisse, in which he had so often played about. She kept looking them over and over: sometimes she kissed them; sometimes she pressed them to her heart and to her eyes.

"And you saw them taken off!" at last she said. "Ah, Hislop! my poor child. Where is he now?"

"We have clothed him in one of his own long night-gowns. He had been already placed in a shell when he came here, poor little love! But Mr. Saxston would not suffer him to be touched,

or anything more done, till he was brought here, poor thing! Mr. Gorhambury insisted upon Mr. Peters and Mr. Saxston being present whilst I took the things off. I did it, my lady, with my own hands. But, oh dear me! so changed! I would not—I could not have you see him, my dear lady, for all the world."

"I wish to see him, and I must see him. I cannot rest without I do. I must kiss his little hand, his little cheek. Ah, Hislop! Hislop!"

"His hand! his cheeks! No, my dear lady," said the good housekeeper, gravely. "You must kiss them again in heaven; they are dust and ashes now."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, my lady, to tell you the truth at once, the identity being ascertained, without a doubt, by the clothes, and proper attestations having been made, Mr. Gorhambury, seeing the sad state of the poor little remains, thought it best that the coffin should be closed. It has been soldered up. Indeed, indeed, my lady, believe me, he did right—we did right; it was necessary."

"You did greatly—greatly wrong. How come I to be the last to be informed that my child was found? How come you, my servants—Mr. Peters—to lend yourselves to conduct like this? Not even the choice offered me—not even the opportunity of satisfying myself—"

"Dear, my lady! this happened in the night, or so early this morning, that you were asleep; and all the gentlemen, and Mr. Peters more particularly, agreed that you had better not be disturbed."

"Fools!" was the indignant exclamation. "Pick me up that lock of hair, which has fallen down. Is this a lock of my child's hair?" she said, looking at it with suspicion. "My child's hair was more golden than this."

"Dear, my lady! you forget how long it has lain drenched in the water."

"This is not like thy hair, my child!" she kept repeating. "The garments are thine, and I can press them to my heart. This hair is a stranger to it. I *will* see the body!"

"Dear, dear, my lady! don't, don't think of it. Mr. Peters, all of them say—"

"Silence, Hislop! I *will* see the body!"

It was in vain to remonstrate. She was determined; and there was no one who, in this respect, could pretend to have the right to control her.

In vain Mr. Gorhambury, Mr. Peters, her servants, pleaded and assured her of the uselessness of the proceeding, of the sad changes which had taken place having rendered it impossible to recognise the child, except by the clothes and the hair. But she was obstinate, and they were forced to yield.

With infinite vexation, Mr. Gorhambury saw that covering removed, which he had hoped had sealed the transaction in silence for ever. He stood at the door of Lady Aylmer's room, listening in breathless anxiety to what would come next.

The door was left open, as the servants carried the mournful little coffin in; and what was his start of horror at the first exclamation of Lady Aylmer, "This is not the body of my child!"

The corpse was, however, so completely changed, so swelled by the water, and defaced by the influences of sun and air, that no one could wonder that she did not recognise it. The servants stood by gazing and shedding compassionate tears, but the mother's eyes were dry.

"This is not my child!" she kept repeating. Mr. Gorhambury could bear it no longer; he came into the room.

"What can you intend," he said harshly, "by the repetition of this wild assertion? Only one thing, it is plain, to keep me out of—and yourself in—possession of the late Lord Aylmer's entailed property, now mine. What am I to understand by this obstinate and—I would not be severe—*interested* incredulity?"

"Give it what name you please, Sir—obstinate or interested, it is indifferent to me. This is not the body of my child."

"Dear, my lady, you are raving, and— The clothes, and the hair!" put in Hislop, sadly.

"The hair is not his hair; but the clothes are his clothes. And you all say this poor drowned child was clothed in them. And you, Hislop, say you took them off; and you,

Willmore, and Mr. Peters, saw them taken off; but, I repeat it, this is not the body of my child. Take the poor thing away, and bury it where you will; by my dear Lord Aylmer, no doubt; but that is not his child."

The attendants looked at each other significantly.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" muttered Mr. Gorhambury.

"Do not speak so of me. Do not look significantly at me. Do not, Sir, pretend to suspect that my wits are failing me; you *know* they are not," she said, almost fiercely. "Take the inheritance if you will: the law, I suppose, will give it you now; but," looking steadily in his face, "you know best, whether you are not despoiling the widow and the orphan."

CHAPTER IX.

It was, in truth, a case that would not admit of a legal question. The best professional advice upon the subject was taken by Lady Aylmer, but the matter would not admit of a doubt. The opinions were unanimous, and indeed were delivered in a manner which gave Lady Aylmer the very painful impression that her perseverance was attributed either to very selfish and improper motives, or to a mind unsettled by misfortune. The matter was therefore dropped. Lady Aylmer took her departure from the Castle, and surrendered possession to Mr. Gorhambury. She retired upon the slender provision of three hundred a-year, which was all she took by her

settlement; the settlement having, in truth, been intended by the old lord rather to bar her dower, than for any other purpose.

Mr. Gorhambury used every persuasion in vain to induce her to accept an annuity from his hands. The amount of this annuity had, indeed, as he reflected upon the subject (the first desire, to justify himself to his own conscience, subsiding gradually,) fallen to one far short of the provisions of the will. Still, he would have been willing to make a handsome and sufficient provision for the widow of Lord Aylmer, at least according to his ideas of what that position demanded. It would have been a source of considerable satisfaction to him if this had been accepted; for though all the usual arguments were urged, with which the arch advocate of evil, may be almost heard to plead his cause in the secret chambers of the heart, he could not succeed in altogether quieting the voice within. He said to himself that he, as heir, had an undoubted right to the property. Perhaps the way in which the death of the child had been proved, though such as the necessity of the case required, might not be altogether irreproachable; yet the fact of the death being unquestion-

able, what mattered a few idle scruples as to the means of proving it? True, he had destroyed the will; but this was only done to take from a woman half mad with pride and disappointment, the power of dissipating a fine property among lawyers. Then as to the provision offered, it was as large as in equity Lord Aylmer ought to have given to a woman, who came portionless into the *family;* but be its amount small or great, it mattered not, for he was persuaded she would be too wilful to accept it.

And in this last supposition, as we have seen, he proved to be right. Lady Aylmer, though compelled as it were to silence by the universal conviction of all around, still maintained her suspicions. But she said no more, feeling that her own powers of action, should the time for action ever arrive, would be only weakened by the charge to which further opposition exposed her, namely, that of being interested, or of a mind diseased; and thus the persuasions of others would but be strengthened by her perseverance in contradicting them. Receive anything from Mr. Gorhambury, however, that she would not.

"*He* knows," she said, "that my own con-

victions are unchanged, that I still believe the body brought forward was not that of my child. How it has all come to pass, I can form no idea, I do not pretend to account for it; but what I repeat is, that he knows that I do not believe that the body he and his produced, was that of my child. I still feel persuaded the boy lives, and will one day claim his own. When that day arrives, he shall not find his mother receiving a stipend from the hand that wronged him."

"Wronged him!" exclaimed the by-standers, in a tone that expressed disapprobation.

"Wronged him!" she repeated. "And I will accept nothing—no, not one penny from Mr. Gorhambury."

To this resolution Lady Aylmer adhered. She retired from the Castle, and her health requiring almost daily assistance from a more skilful medical man, than was likely to be found in the remote place where her mother lived, decided upon taking a small house in the neighbourhood of the city of G——, that

cathedral town where Mr. Gorhambury had lived, and where his friend the Dean still lived, and where Mr. Gorhambury's curate, Mr. Lovel, lived.

The mother of Lady Aylmer, indeed, survived the shock of these events but a very short time. A paralytic stroke deprived her of speech, and soon afterwards she died. Amid the hurry of events, anything that might have been remarked as peculiar in the conduct of the little boy's maid escaped observation. The state of Lady Aylmer's health rendered it impossible for her to be carried the distance, and over the roads, which led to her mother's house: but the city of G—— not being far off, and the roads good — she was moved there. The aged mother, therefore, died without seeing her daughter again, and thus all clue to the transaction was lost.

Mr. Gorhambury, who suffered for some months the most harassing anxiety from the idea of detection, found his mind considerably relieved by this turn of affairs; and he settled himself down with his wife and his son, to the enjoyment of the princely fortune he had ob-

tained. Such enjoyment at least as ill-gotten wealth bestows!

He found possession, as many, with far less reason, who have only too greedily desired, without using guilty means to obtain, have, from experience, found it. He found possession, an apple of Sodom—all dust and ashes within. He became a very gloomy, dissatisfied, restless-tempered man, far more austere and reserved in his deportment than ever; and accordingly more than ever disliked by all who knew him. For one thing in particular he was especially censured—he never, from the time he came to his fortune, could be prevailed upon, be the occasion what it might, professionally to take part in the services of his Church. Perhaps this, to those who know him as we do, will appear the only sign of grace about him.

It was a sweet, soft summer evening, when Lady Aylmer was lifted from the carriage-bed in which she had travelled, and was laid

upon a couch in the small dining-room of the diminutive, but pretty cottage, which was henceforward to be her home.

Alone, without a friendly voice to cheer her, in the drear solitude of a childless widow; her body crippled, every motion a pain, the light of her eyes extinguished, and the hope which sustained her, so far as this world was concerned, become almost as a delirious dream!

But she had a constant heart, a firm temper, a faithful reliance upon God. The convictions of her relation to One Great Mind, One All-diffusing Head, with whom her moral being was linked by ties indestructible; in whose hands she was, whose providence was over her, as over all, and in whose government there was neither overlooking nor forgetting, nor indifference, nor neglect, for any the smallest living being; her conviction of the reality of these things was deep and sincere. Lady Aylmer was possessed of that blessing of all blessings — a true, strong, lively faith; and let people consider such faith as well or ill-founded —"bottled smoke," if they please, in their arrogant assumption of superior wisdom, so to style it—but let them try to find a substitute;

let them find for us a strength in weakness, a companion in solitude, a solace in suffering, like this — namely, the sure trust in exercises of faith, in devotion to duty, to submission and resignation; not to a blind necessity, but to a Father — to an all-wise and merciful God!

This poor, suffering, weak and forsaken woman proved the truth of these things, as thousands and thousands weak, suffering, and forsaken of all the world, like her, have proved, and, please God, will continue to prove them, in spite of the scoffs and scorns of vain Socialists, who ought to know better, who *do* know better, if the pride and haughtiness of their heart would but let them confess it.

This poor, weak, excitable, suffering, desolate woman laid her head down upon her pillow in that little cottage of hers; and she had the strength given her to utter:

"'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

And will you presume to say she was not the better for it—with your "bottled smoke?"

Mr. Lovel, the curate, was the first person who came to call upon Lady Aylmer. The morning after he heard of her arrival, he said to his little daughter, Hernana:

"Child, get thyself ready, and put on thy best becomes; for thou must go with me and make a visit."

"Oh! I am so glad. And who are we going to see, papa? Shall I put on my best bonnet?"

"I told thee—did I not?—to put on thy best becomes; for we are to visit a lady, who was once among the grandest in the land, but is now desolate as the widow of Tekoah; and therefore, my little girl, as far as dress, can do her honour, do her honour; and as far as kindness can give her comfort, give her comfort; and I look to you, my little woman, to try to do that; for I think thou wouldst comfort Despair himself, if thou didst meet him."

"Dress, papa," said Hernana, glancing at her father's hat, which he had taken off, and in his usual careless way had put down upon the chair next him, "dress, dear papa, proves

respect; and one ought to be neat, because the lady was rich, and is now poor—"

Hernana mused a little; till she had settled the propriety, and the kindness, and the delicacy of all this in her heart; and then, taking up her father's hat, and putting it on her hand, as on a pole, she turned it round and round, with an expression half-charmed, half-diverted, and added:

"And this old hat!"

"Never mind my old hat. I am an old fellow, and become an old hat."

"But you are not an old fellow at all, papa," she said, with a look of admiration, as she turned to him. "You are quite young, and one of the most beautiful men that ever was seen; and you don't suit at all with this old hat."

"Well, if I don't, something else does, you little flatterer," said he, pleased in spite of himself with his darling child's simple admiration.

"Something else? Oh, frugality! and suppose—s'pose—s'pose! Why, I really believe, papa, so you could feed the hungry, and

clothe the naked, you would not care if you went without any rim to your hat at all."

"Not very much, perhaps," said he, laughing; "but I should have the sun in my eyes. However, never mind my hat; hats are costly things, and I have no money to spare; but out of respect to this poor Lady Aylmer, brush it up, and make it as spruce as you can, my darling." And he went to his study.

Hernana stood there and mused, as she turned round the hat, with its white, worn line round the crown, and its napless, bare rim, and its shabby, crushed appearance. And she thought upon the anchorite, upon the self-denying, the ascetic, yet the generous, gladsome, sweet character of her father, till she almost thought a hat like that of other men would misbecome him; that his eye, so penetrating and clear, his fine intellectual brow, his smile of unparalleled beauty and sweetness, would look less peculiarly his own, if he wore a hat and coat like common gentlemen: like the Dean, for instance, or like Mr. Gorhambury, or like Mr. This or That. And her face was lit up with a bright enthusiasm, as she looked at the hat. But that expressive countenance saddened

suddenly. She recollected Philip Gorhambury, and that he had made game of her father's hat, and had said that Mr. Lovel looked like a beggar in it; and that there was stinginess, as well as economy, in going about in that way, and that everybody thought her father was either stingy, or an oddity, for wearing such a preposterous hat. She had gone into a vehement passion upon the occasion; still Philip, who loved and admired her above all things, had at length pacified her by saying, that *he* did not think this of her father, that he only meant to tell her what others said, and begging her to be rational, and try to persuade her father to mend his shocking bad hat.

All this had been working in her mind very uncomfortably for some time; and it came into it just now. She could not bear the thought of her father's motives being mistaken, and he held up to ridicule in this way; and she now resolved upon trying to persuade him to get another hat upon occasion of his visit to Lady Aylmer.

CHAPTER X.

The little Hernana was at this time about eight years old; but she was so very fine and intelligent a child, and so accustomed, motherless girl as she was, to act for herself, that she in many things appeared much older, and might be considered as quite a little woman. Her father's singular character, his extreme goodness, his genius and his energy, united with that indifference to all merely conventional matters which distinguished him, had called forth, in this clever and remarkable creature, many faculties which in general lie still dormant at her age.

Hernana was observant, prudent, and provi-

dent; careful of her own little concerns, and indefatigable in helping the one maid-servant—an old woman, who had lived ever since Lovel himself had been born, in the family—in all that she could. The child was indefatigable in assisting this aged person in every duty she had to perform; from sweeping rooms, and peeling potatoes, to what the little girl loved best of all—mending her father's clothes, and washing and starching his bands.

Her father she loved with that sort of profound attachment that one may suppose a little dog, if it could speak, would express for its master. And no wonder, for Lovel was gentle and tender in the extreme; and though somewhat melancholy and thoughtful in his deportment, a gentle gaiety would play like a lambent flame around him, and make him little short of adorable. Upon the subject of her father's equipment, as regarded his outer man, Hernana was anxious, not so much from her own observation—for children of that age are not usually very regardful of such things—but because she had heard Mrs. Alworthy—for by that title was the one servant dignified—very often lament it. The good woman saying,

what a pity it was, that so beautiful a young man as her master should dress almost no better than a beggar.

But little did Lovel heed either the hints of good Mrs Alworthy, or the representations of his little girl. So long as there was one poor creature among his parishioners wanting bread, the money in his pocket was sure to find its way to the baker's, instead of to the tailor's or hatter's. Not that he felt or affected any philosophical indifference as regarded these things, but that really it was impossible to him, to spend any money upon himself, so long as there were others that wanted it more; and he was, moreover, very poor.

The half-pay of a captain in a line regiment, and eighty pounds a-year, his stipend as curate to Mr. Gorhambury, was all that he possessed. About fifty pounds a-year of this was expended in a life insurance, to provide for his little girl at his death. So having sacrificed so large a portion of his income to domestic prudence, he felt that what remained ought more especially to be devoted to those calls of humanity so urgent upon those of his profession, who perform its duties as they ought.

A little sum—not much—but a little sum was also dedicated to the indulgence of dressing his child somewhat better than he dressed himself. His coat might be threadbare, and his hat worn out; but his Hernana, simply as she was always attired, must be respectable and nice.

Mrs. Alworthy lent herself to this last peculiarity with abundant good-will, and for a trifling sum kept the little girl so neatly, that she never had to feel ashamed of her appearance among her young friends and neighbours.

And Hernana loved the pretty straw hat with pink ribbons, which Mrs. Alworthy had just trimmed for her, with all her heart; and the pleasure of a walk with her father, and a visit to Lady Aylmer, was very much increased by the being desired to put it on. Perhaps, too, she might meet Philip Gorhambury: he had not seen her in her new hat.

She wondered whether they must pass the Rectory to go to Lady Aylmer's. But now again she meditates upon her father's hat; and the more she looks at it, the shabbier she thinks it: in truth, she could not think it shabbier than it really was; and she also remembers that

Philip Gorhambury made game of it yesterday —only yesterday. Her father must have a new hat.

She was a privileged person. She might go into her father's little study whenever she would. If he were busy, or if he were melancholy, he would gently send her out again; but most often he took her upon his knee, and cheered his mind with a little prattling and joking before he let her go. So she made no scruple of opening his study door, and there she found him with an open drawer before him. The drawer, in fact, was that in which he kept his money; which money (strange employment for him to be caught in!) he was counting and recounting, over and over. The treasure was made up of pieces but small in value—shillings, sixpences, pence and half-pence. He sighed as he gathered the tiny heap in his hand; and then shuffling it into the farther division of the drawer, he shut it, and looked up with—

"And what do you come for, my little girl?"

She had the hat in her hand.

"Papa, I am come to talk to you about your hat."

"Well, child! But you haven't brushed it, Hernana. You are a little sloven. I thought you would have made it quite spruce by this time."

"Mrs. Alworthy says it is not brushable."

"Nonsense, of Mrs. Alworthy. It looks bad, to be sure," said he, regarding it with a queer sort of smile; "and how it is to last me six months longer, may be a question to be asked; but it must do for the present, my love."

"Oh, papa! but Mrs. Alworthy, and Philip Gorhambury, and everybody, say it is so shabby."

"I am sorry for that."

"Philip says he should be quite ashamed, if he was me, to walk out with such a hat."

"Does he? And does Mrs. Alworthy?"

"No; she never said so; but Philip does, over and over."

"And *are* you ashamed, Hernana?"

"Why—why, no; but," and the colour rose to her olive cheek, "I do wish you *would* buy a new hat. Do, dear papa, do."

"But if I have no money to buy one?"

"Dear papa, but you have some money. You were counting a great big heap of money, as big as this, when I came into the room."

"But suppose I want the money for other things?"

"Oh! but what other things? Nothing shows so much as a hat. Philip says—"

"What does Philip say?"

"He says — oh, papa! it's so shocking — that people call you stingy, and think you mean and a miser; for nobody else would dress so unlike a gentleman. That's what he says, papa; and it makes me almost cry to hear him."

"Come here, my little Hernana, (for you look ready, at all events, to cry now), and sit down upon your father's lap, and let us talk about it. Does my child say that everybody cries shame upon her father, because he does not get himself a *new hat*? And

do they call it mean and miserly? Was that it? What is mean and miserly, little woman? Do you know what those terms signify?"

"Something very horrid, I am sure; and what everybody hates; and what you are not, I am certain, papa; for everybody loves you."

"That's very good of everybody, I am sure, when a man wears a shabby hat. I did not think there had been so much goodness in the world. So it's mean and miserly in me, is it, Hernana?"

"So they say, and I can't bear to hear it. Do, pray, papa, get a new hat."

"A mean person," Mr. Lovel went on, bending his beautiful, serious eyes upon his daughter's face, "is one who spares his money by taking unfair advantages of others; who endeavours to obtain services unrecompensed; and to discharge duties—the duties of hospitality, liberality, and generosity—by halves, in order to save the appearance, and spare the cost. Dost thou understand me, child?"

"Yes, papa, I do."

"A miser is one," Mr. Lovel continued,

"who hoards his money for no purpose, but to gratify the base desire of mere possession—the sin of covetousness. Now, Hernana, though it does not become a man to speak up for himself, this once I must do it. I am *not* mean, for the person on whom I spare is myself, not another: I am *not* miserly, for the money I save is not intended to be hoarded. Child, we are very poor people, you and I, and it is difficult for the poor to walk uprightly, and honourably, and liberally, and generously; and it is most especially difficult to avoid false shame. But, my dear, we must be all these things, and we *must* defy false shame, if we would acquit ourselves to God and to our own consciences. You understand me, I see you do," he went on, for the expressive eyes of the little girl showed that she did. "And now I will tell you why I have not, and why I cannot for a long time, have a hat. There is a man in this city who has fallen into great poverty by no fault of his own, and his children are crying for bread. He is not a beggar: he cannot take refuge in the workhouse with his children—he would rather lie down and die than do that. He once, when my father was

in difficulties, lent him money: I must now lend *him* money. What I have, he shall have. It would cost me a guinea to buy a new hat—half of all I can spare at present: I choose to give it to this man, to buy bread for his children, Hernana; and I will wear a shabby hat, call me mean and miserly who may. Shall you be ashamed to walk with me now, Hernana?"

She made no answer; she still held the hat. Presently she began to press it to her bosom, and to cover it with kisses—with tears. She slid down from her father's knee, carrying the hat with her. Oh! how she and Mrs. Alworthy brushed and smoothed, and did the impossible to improve its appearance! And they so far succeeded that when Mr. Lovel put it upon his head, he declared that he did not know his own hat again!

And now, father and daughter, hand in hand, are making their way to Lady Aylmer's. They have to pass the Rectory, and Hernana casts wistful looks at the windows upon the

garden side of the house; for their path lay by the wall, towards which Philip's room looked. But no Philip is to be seen. They turn the angle of the garden, and then they command a view of the front door. There is a chariot-and-four standing before it; which is being loaded with trunks and imperials; the postilions, in smart scarlet jackets, are standing whip in hand upon the causeway; and the lady's-maid is packing the inside of the carriage.

"Heyday!" says Mr. Lovel, "off so soon!"

"Where is Mr. Gorhambury going?" asks Hernana.

"Why, to the Castle in Wales, of course; which has just come into Mr. Gorhambury's possession, where else? But here is your friend Philip."

Philip was hurrying down the steps; he had a gun-case in his hand, containing a new gun, the first gun he had ever possessed; and was followed by two pointers, the first game dogs he had ever called his own, having begged them from his mother as the first boon to be granted on occasion of his father's accession

of fortune. He was very proud of these acquisitions, as most boys of his age, which was about twelve, would have been. And he seemed too much engaged, in giving orders in a somewhat imperious manner, with respect to the bestowal of his property, to be able to regard the little girl with coal-black hair, beautiful olive skin, and large dark eyes, who, in her best hat, was coming down the street, hand and hand with her father.

"Hallo! Can't you get out of the way? Why, I declare, it is you, Mr. Lovel; how do you do? Hernana! where *did* you get that pretty hat?"

Hernana smiled, and coloured, and held out her little hand to him demurely, saying:

"But where are *you* going to, Philip?"

"Oh, haven't you heard? Perhaps not—my father kept it secret a little while; but now, everybody knows. He's come into a splendid fortune, and we are all going to live at a magnificent castle that he's got. So good-by to G——, except when he's in residence."

Her countenance was clouded over with an expression of sudden dismay, quite pathetic in so young a child.

"Going away! going away!" she faltered; "you, Philip, going away?"

He looked at her; boy as he was, he already loved her passionately. His look said:

"Do you care, darling? Do you care?"

He flung down his gun-case, caught her in his arms, kissed her, and said:

"Go where I will, I will soon be back wherever you are, Hernana. It's no great way off; I shall be always coming to see you. May I, Mr. Lovel? Shall I, Mr. Lovel?"

"We will talk of that some other time. Come along, my little girl."

She followed, holding her father's hand; but her head turned the contrary way, her eyes fixed upon Philip and the carriage which was to carry him off. He kept making signs to her which she well understood, and with them her heart was cheered and satisfied.

They soon lost sight of the Rectory door; and turning down another street, which led to the fields, entered upon a pleasant common, which spread towards the mountains, and round

which were various small cottages of gentility. They rang at the bell of the wicket which led to the one belonging to Lady Aylmer.

"Mr. Lovel, my Lady," said the maid, opening the door of the small sitting-room, in which Lady Aylmer was lying upon a sofa, placed near the window.

The room was arranged with a certain elegance which bespoke the refined habits of the possessor. The windows were open, looking upon a flower-garden, and were embowered in clematis and abundant roses of various colours. The furniture was neat; and there were several ornaments in Dresden china, groupes in alabaster, bijouterie, &c., with a few choice pictures which had adorned Lady Aylmer's dressing-room in better days, and were unquestionably her own property. Upon a beautifully inlaid table, in the centre of the room, was a fine vase of Bohemian glass, filled with lovely flowers. Everything around was so arranged, as to strike the imagination with a sense of poetic beauty; but what so beau-

tiful as Lady Aylmer herself? The deep black; the peculiar, almost monastic form, of the head-dress she wore; the lovely features—so wan, so pale, so delicate, so instinct with feeling, so interesting from the vestiges of her recent anguish—rendered her altogether the most lovely picture that could be imagined. She strove to rise, as the servant opened the door, but fell back again. With a cry of surprise, she clasped her hands together, when the Curate entered the room:

"You! you! Is it possible? How changed! yet, how unchanged! You, Lovel? Captain Lovel!"

"Louisa!" in a voice of much emotion: "Louisa! Yes, I thought, I feared, and yet, I hoped—Louisa! Do we indeed meet again?"

"Do we meet again? Ah! Captain Lovel! yes, yes; but how? but how?"

"How? indeed!"

"He is gone; they are gone; all are gone. My husband, Lord Aylmer—ah! you never saw him. My boy! my little one! all, all lost!"

"I had heard it. I feared, and yet I hoped:

feared it was you, yet could not—could not help hoping — to see you again — even thus—"

He was evidently very much affected. He turned away, and walked to one of the pictures, pretending to examine it, and striving to compose himself. Whilst he did so, Lady Aylmer, who seemed to find it much less difficult to recover her composure, stretched out her hand, and said:

"Come hither, my nice little girl. Are you Captain Lovel's daughter?"

"Papa isn't a captain now, he's a clergyman," said Hernana.

"Ah! And how long has Captain Lovel left the army?" she said, turning to him.

He looked round at this. That face! that face! oh, that face! What a host of emotions overwhelmed him! He turned away again. He would have given worlds to emulate her serenity—her cruel, cruel indifference, as he could not help calling it. But no; it was impossible.

She saw how it was with him—sighed, as certain recollections passed over her mind, but did not seem in the least to share in his

agitation. She drew the little girl towards her, held her hand, and kept gazing at her with pleasure and curiosity, perusing her features with a wondering air. Then having, as she thought, given him sufficient time to compose himself, she said:

"Captain Lovel married in Spain? I think I heard so. And this little girl? and the lady herself?"

"Yes," said he, turning round at last, and looking gravely and sadly, "yes, he who was Captain Lovel married in Spain, and it was to the mother of that little girl—*my* little girl—all that is left to me in this world, for *she* is dead."

"Ah! death is cruel, death devours all," she said; "the best, the most precious, all go—all go!"

The idea of death is the only one which can hold the balance with that of love. It solemnizes, it pacifies, it exalts. Love and death are kin to each other. When she spoke of death, the wild emotions which for a moment had overpowered Mr. Lovel, at thus beholding restored, in more than earthly beauty, the idol of his first affections, the woman he had so

passionately loved, subsided into something sweet and holy. He drew a chair by the sofa, took his little girl's other hand in his; and thus, as it were, calmed and strengthened by the presence of one who recalled the memory of a later love, he said gently:

"I never thought to see you in this world again."

"You see me now," she answered, "as one scarcely belonging to this world; for all I loved have perished, and the earth is a dark desert to me. You, too—"

"Have lost that which I loved—that which loved me, as none ever can or will love me again."

"But you have this child; and I—" She uttered all this without shedding a tear: her tears seemed exhausted. Then fixing her beautiful eyes upon Hernana, she said: "My very soul is knitting itself to this child. Her name?"

"Hernana."

"Hernana, can you love me?"

Hernana fixed her eyes gravely upon the lady, not quite understanding this scene—as how should she? She recollected what

her father had told her of Lady Aylmer. She thought her the most beautiful creature that she had ever beheld, and all that surrounded her more like some beautiful dream of fairy-land than anything real. She was bewildered with delight. And this lovely lady spoke so kindly, too!

The friendship, thus begun, continued. Lady Aylmer became excessively attached to the little girl, and Hernana returned her affection with a love amounting almost to worship.

Mr. Lovel understood the terms to which Lady Aylmer intended to confine him; but that which, some years before, had driven him to Spain—a man desperate, and distracted with an unhappy passion—he was now able to rejoice in, as a calm and sweet solace for his remaining life. Her friendship, the offer of which, ten years ago, had driven him to frenzy, was now received as a precious gift of inestimable value.

To see his little girl *thus adopted* by

one so endowed with genius and accomplishments, was in itself a matter of unspeakable delight. The young creature, who might have been in danger of becoming singular through the originality of her thoughts, and the noble simplicity of her temper, under such guidance, would be trained into all that the heart of father could desire. And so it proved. Hernana grew up, under these auspices, everything that could be wished; though that she preserved much of her native originality, and continued to be very unlike most of the young ladies around her. She retained all her simple habits of activity and usefulness; habits, indeed, which her father's narrow circumstances only rendered the more necessary as she grew up, and became, unavoidably, a source of somewhat increased expense.

The extreme simplicity of the life she led emancipated her from those fetters, which the conventionalism of general society unavoidably imposes; and this freedom of thought and action, the noble sentiments of her disinterested and warm affection for the two who so well deserved to inspire it; an habi-

tual course of self-sacrifice in smaller, as well as in greater things; the absolute necessity of being content without those vanities, luxuries, and pleasures, which the wealth of those around her enabled them to command, had given a noble elevation to her character. And this shone forth in her countenance, in her form, in her gestures. Her expression was sweet, earnest, fervent; her eyes, when melting with feeling, or kindling with energy, had in them those depths of sensibility which exercise such a strange influence over us all. Her figure, tall and finely formed, was erect as that of a young sapling drawn up amid surrounding trees, unheeded by man, but pruned by the hand of Nature herself, and fed by the great mother; rising graceful, complete, and straight towards heaven. Her voice and gestures insensibly softened by communication with one so refined as Lady Aylmer, had in them a something inconceivably charming. Free, without boldness; graceful, without affectation; expressive of everything that was lovely, generous, or feeling. A charming creature, indeed!

And great was the comfort the lonely and

childless widow experienced in the strong and fervent attachment which she had inspired, and in the occupation she found in thus training the promising girl. Her mind was by these means preserved from sinking into that state of morbid languor and apathy which is but too frequently the result of affections irrevocably absorbed by—of living, with as it were—the dead; for with the dead, the reality of Lady Aylmer's life might be said to be.

The memory of the husband she had loved so tenderly, was cherished by her with a sacredness of devotion, which forbade the substitution, even in thought, of any other object; and this devotion, perhaps, it was which rendered her friendship for Mr. Lovel so soothing, because it was so single-hearted and sincere. The danger to the health of her mind arose not so much from this devotion to her husband's memory—a feeling wholesome, holy, and far from singular — but from the remarkable position with which she stood as regarded her child, which she had loved with a passion rare even in so young and ardent a heart as hers."

In spite of all that had occurred, the persuasion which she had from the first entertained, that the child was not dead, remained, and was only strengthened by years. She had ceased to speak upon the subject to any one; even to Mr. Lovel, in their most confidential moments, this was not touched upon. It seemed as if the persuasion, which was the secret joy and consolation of her heart, was to her like some beautiful image long entombed, which would crumble into dust, vanish and cease to be, if exposed to the common air.

The glove lay in her bosom day and night. That glove was to her heart as her little child. There were moments when imagination worked so strongly, that she almost could believe that so it was! Her whole internal life was made up of the idea—that even in this world she should see her child again. The when—the how, was the subject of constant alternations of hope and fear. But there was one terrible anxiety which, but for her extraordinary strength of mind, might have well-nigh upset it: and that was—the doubt

as to the condition in which her child might be now!

This idea would at times present itself with such agonising force, that it seemed as if her mind must altogether give way under the horror of the suppositions which presented themselves. Then she could only cast herself —poor helpless mother!—upon God, beseeching Him, with cries and tears of anguished prayer, to shield and protect her little one from misery, and worse, far worse than misery—contamination. But, mercifully for her—and, as it may seem to us, scarcely credible—most often her feelings upon this subject were hopeful and calm. It seemed as if borne in upon her mind, that wherever placed, or however situated, her child was doing well.

She dwelt upon his loveliness, the intelligence and sweetness upon which she had so passionately doted; and she seemed to feel assured that the power of their fascinations —wherever exercised—would be felt. She pictured him as radiant in beauty, and surrounded with love. And these sweet delu-

sions of the fancy happily dwelt with her with almost as much pertinacity, as the conviction that the boy was not lost, and that sooner or later he would be restored.

Such is a faint attempt to picture the state of Lady Aylmer's mind.

CHAPTER XI.

THE waste of waters lay before, behind, around him; but still he held the child clasped with the left arm to his bosom, whilst with the right he shook the bridle, and with knee and voice urged and encouraged the horse to breast the current, and swim on. The rain fell thick and fast, the clouds were heavy, the sun had set some quarter of an hour. It began to grow so dark, that objects at any distance could scarcely be perceived; the opposite bank, however, was still visible, and towards it the rider pressed forward.

The generous animal he rode, made almost

supernatural efforts to stem the torrent, which, towards the middle of what was now become rather a lake than a river, rushed with violence towards the sea. Every now and then the horse seemed to falter; and the rider's cheek became paler, and his heart almost ceased to beat from fear and anxiety. Not that he cast one thought upon his own fate; he only felt for the precious child that nestled in his bosom—silent, determined, and brave as himself.

The little boy had, in a few brief sentences, been made to understand the nature of the danger, and the necessity for keeping himself perfectly still, so as not to disturb the equilibrium of either horse or rider; and with a heroism, not uncommon among children of his age, he preserved the most resolute silence, fixing his large blue eyes upon the waters before him, and quietly expecting his fate.

Forward! forward! brave struggling steed! Yet one other desperate effort, and the rushing torrent shall be passed. And now they have reached the smoother water, which by this time had covered all the low broken ground

extending to the banks; and so, sometimes swimming, sometimes wading, the horse made his way; and already the steep road of yellow clay, which led upwards towards the mountains, became discernible; and to it Mr. Yates guided his steed. Slippery and steep it was, and difficult the scramble out of the water; but the gallant horse struggled with what strength he now had left, made his footing good, and was climbing up the bank, when, from the thickets which closely overhung this hollow way, strange apparitions suddenly appeared. Dark forms of men, with black locks, black flashing eyes, lean, sinewy figures; and women, with wild yet beautiful features. Every face, however, lighted up with a sort of ferocious energy, as they rushed down suddenly from the bushes; and surrounding the horse, began to attack him and his rider.

The man and child were soon dragged down; and as Mr. Yates was falling, a heavy blow from a bludgeon struck his face, cutting the skin, and drawing blood, some of which dropped upon the saddle as he sank to the ground, still holding the child, now mute with terror, in his arms. The horse, making a

desperate effort, extricated himself from the crowd, and galloped at the top of his speed home.

His rider lay extended upon the earth, face upwards, looking round at the hideous and malignant countenances which surrounded him. He knew, well enough, where he was, and what he had to expect; for two fiendish eyes were glaring upon him—from a woman's face—or rather, from the face of a female fury.

"Ay!" she cried, in her peculiar language, which her victim, however, in some degree understood. "You have it now! Your turn is come at last! You, who sent an honest mother's son—a loving wife's husband—over the salt seas, thousands of miles away, for filching a horse or a sheep. Ay! you have it now! Your turn is come at last! Not *over* —but *in*. Heave him up lads! heave him up! But give him a quieter first; for he can swim like an otter."

"What I did," answered the good and brave man, fixing his eyes calmly and resolutely upon hers, now flashing upon him like two baleful meteors. "What I did, was in defence of the laws of the land; which you, and yours, spend

your lives in breaking. I am at your mercy; you must do with me what you will; but spare the child! the young, innocent child! He has done you no injury."

"Ha! ha! ha! Spare the child—a likely story. *He* has not hurt the Busné, not he! No! no! no! but those he belongs to, have. Who has persecuted the children of Egypt like his father? he, the fine lord, the magistrate. Did he not sign the warrant with his own hand which sent my child to the gaol, and from the gaol over the salt, salt sea. Ha! ha! No harm has he? Let him feel what it is to be childless, like me. Come here; give me the yellow-haired brat. I'll send him over those waters from which they *never* return, and you to keep him company, Squire Yates."

"Spare the child! spare the child!" cried Yates, struggling and endeavouring to free himself from the gripe of the gipsies, who had fastened upon him, and in a manner pinned him down, whilst this colloquy with the beldame was going on; "spare the child! As there is a God above, who sooner or later will take vengeance upon a foul murder, spare the child, and do with me what you will!"

"Give me the child! give me the chicken with the golden feathers and the blue sapphire eyes. Give—give—let me wring his neck before those eyes, and teach Master Yates, and those with whom he consorts, what it is to rouse the blood of the Callo to fury."

And she turned fiercely round, and made a clutch at the boy, who, speechless with terror, his large blue eyes wide staring and aghast, his beautiful golden hair streaming over his shoulders, gazed upon the scene, unable to utter a sound, or shed a tear.

He had been lifted from the ground, and was now in the arms of a tall, strapping young woman, whose limbs, remarkable for their beautiful proportions, showed the sinewy strength of an Amazon, and whose splendid features were lighted up with excitement.

"Give him to me! give him to me!" furiously shouted the old gipsy woman.

"Never, never, never!" shrieked the other, with a wild laugh of defiance. "Never, never, never! for is he not beautiful as a fairy child, with his heaven-blue eyes, and his locks of pale gold. And is he not brave as a lioness's whelp, the bold and beautiful one? See, he

neither utters a cry, nor sheds a tear." And she clasped him passionately to her breast. "And is he not mine? my jewel, my treasure, my idol, and my gem! Fear nothing, my little angel thing, fear nothing; thou art mine, mine, mine!" And again she lifted up the beautiful child, and uttered a scream of wild defiance.

The old gipsy rushed through the circle of men, women, and children assembled round the captured man, outside of which the beautiful Hesther now stood, holding up, with uplifted arms, her prize in triumph. She made a furious snatch at him.

"Hold fast, hold fast, little one!" cried Hesther; and the little one clasped his arms closely round her neck. "Catch who catch can;" and starting off, and dashing with the speed of a race-horse into the thicket, she was instantly out of sight.

The wretched old woman looked after her for a moment, then shrugging her shoulders with an expression of malignant satisfaction, which seemed to say, "I'll have him soon," returned to the spot where Mr. Yates still lay, watching with anxiety, amounting to agony, the result of

the contest. His ideas were becoming confused, and a heaviness, as of death, was upon him; still he was able to see that the child for the moment was rescued; but farther his thoughts could not go, for death, under its most hideous form, was staring him in the face.

"Not there, but here, you fool of the world! Why, when the rush from the hills is over, and the tide has turned, will he not be left exposed to the sun, as plain to be seen as a stranded seal? No, no, not there. In the pool that has no bottom, or a bottom which lies in the pit of darkness. There—drop him in there."

The body of the unfortunate man was lifted up by two or three desperate-looking young fellows; and led by the beldame, who appeared to feel, though her vengeance was satiated, not the slightest compunction for what she had done, they proceeded along the rugged and broken banks of the river.

At some little distance, surrounded by precipitous rocks, was one of those black, sleeping

pools, of depth unfathomable, which possibly may be the craters of extinct volcanoes.

The scene around was one of utter desolation, of blackened, rugged rocks, bare of vegetation, where not the least shrub was found growing, nor the least sign of animal life to be heard; and here, whilst the rain still fell in floods, rather than torrents, and the wind, howling mournfully between the rocks, sang his dirge, was the unfortunate Yates consigned to the deep waters.

They flung him in silently: even they, savage as they were, could not utter their usual shout of triumphant vengeance over their fallen foe. For Yates was a righteous, just, and good man; and whilst, in obedience to the savage commands of their leader and queen, they had most cruelly murdered him, there was a something that awed even them. The man breathes not, however depraved, who does not instinctively acknowledge and reverence genuine worth.

Their blood was up, and they murdered him ruthlessly; but when that was done, the passions of all, save those of the furious woman, seemed assuaged. In silence they raised him

—in silence they bore him along; silently they flung the body into the pool, and stood watching the dark waters as they closed over him; all silent, except the Fury who presided over this scene of cruelty, she alone uttered a loud scream of triumph as the waters received her victim. No one echoed it.

Hesther felt the soft clinging arms of the little boy about her neck, hanging there in terror unspeakable, yet with childish confidence that he should find protection; and all her strong, warm, woman's heart was moved. She clasped her nervous, beautiful arms closely round him; pressed him to her bosom—felt as if she had seized some inestimable treasure; and that all she had lost was restored.

It was not long since Hesther, a young mother herself, had buried a child of about the same age as the unfortunate heir of Avon. He had been a dark gipsy-boy, with coal-black hair and eyes. She had loved him with passion, because he was like

herself; but with a still more vehement passion her imagination had fastened upon the child she now held, because nothing could be more unlike herself, her son, her tribe, than he.

The moment she beheld him, she had been seized with a strange ravishment, such as one feels when something more glorious and beautiful than the soul has ever pictured, is presented to the eyes. She had pounced upon him like a hen eagle, and had clasped him in her strong arms, whilst she stood with the rest to witness the terrible execution about to be done.

Her heart was a warm and loving one; her nature passionate, devoted, and with the strongest instinct for all that was generous and great. She had lost her own child, through whom all these ardent affections had been satisfied; and she had been a widowed, desolate creature ever since; and now, with a sort of wild ecstasy, as she pressed the golden-haired and beautiful child of the Chalié to her heart, she felt that heart to be again overflowing with sentiments more vehement than ever. The darkness of the soul was

dispelled; the frozen currents of the blood loosened: Hesther was herself again.

The idea of the child being taken from her, and sacrificed to the old mother's revenge, had not entered her head, or that any one would dispute her possession of the treasure which she had picked up, as a discarded thing which nobody cared to possess. But the sudden attack upon him had roused her, as we have seen; and her first impulse had been to fly, to dash forward, and escape with her prize into the wilderness.

Not that she feared the old woman, queen though she might be; no, nor mortal man or woman of earth's mould: Hesther feared nothing — nothing above, nothing beneath, nothing around her. It was only in obedience to an instinctive impulse to snatch the child from immediate danger, that she had taken flight; and she had no intention of continuing it to any great distance, or absenting herself from the encampment to which her tribe were accustomed, at nightfall, to repair.

She felt strong enough to guard her newly-acquired possession against all pretenders, be they who they might. She had reason, how-

ever, to apprehend nothing, except from the old woman; for Hesther was beloved, as well as feared — had excited universal sympathy, through her passionate grief at the loss of her own child, and she felt that every one of the brotherhood would rejoice in her new joy.

Hesther had shared with the old gipsy in the enmity she had felt against Mr. Yates; for she, too, had suffered intensely from that gentleman's perseverance in carrying out the ends of justice. Her own husband had shared the fate of the father and son, whose sentence of transportation for life had filled the heart of the bereaved mother with such deep and unrelenting vengeance.

The old woman had shown the strength of her affections, and her passionate sense of injury, by storms of the wildest fury, whenever the subject was even alluded to; venting her grief in the most dreadful imprecations —calling down vengeance upon the head, and uttering the most fearful threats against the common foe.

Such were her hours of excitement. In her more ordinary moods, she was silent,

gloomy; impatient and surly, when spoken to; going about the different affairs in which she was engaged with indifference; and, as I said before, whenever the subject of her grief was mentioned, bursting forth into the wildest paroxysms of rage.

She was, in fact, in these quiet moments, engaged in planning schemes of vengeance; and as nothing less than the life of her enemy could satisfy her, this she resolved to obtain. Wily as a beast of prey creeping stealthily through the thicket, watching the moment to make the fatal and unerring spring, she had waited for several months, till the trial and condemnation of the three gipsies had been almost forgotten, and she had found her opportunity; and then no fury of the 'Halles' in Paris ever quenched her thirst for blood in a more horrible and barbarous manner.

But Hesther took things differently. The beautiful young woman, carrying her child at her breast, had followed the dark-haired Ro, whom she loved with a passion approaching to frenzy, from prison to the hulks, from

the hulks till she saw him on the deck of the ship which was to carry him to exile.

With what wild and vehement embraces, with what passionate but tearless eyes, with what broken exclamations of her love and sorrow, had the parting been made! The ship was under weigh. They put the poor gipsy girl, now frantic with sorrow, on board the boat, and they rowed to land. One of the sailors, humane and kind, took care of the baby; for, desperate with grief, the mother had endeavoured, with the child in her arms, to spring over the bulwarks of the ship, and bury herself and it in the ocean. Her infant had been taken from her; and Jack held it tenderly to his rugged bosom, whilst some of the others endeavoured, in their rough way, to console the mother.

Her anguish was so vehement and so sincere, that it excited the compassion of all.

"Come, my good young woman, be comforted. He's a fine young chap, no doubt, and a handsome; but better fish than ever were caught, are still swimming in the sea.

Don't take on so. And then there's the child, too!"

"Let me be! Let me alone! What do you hold me for? Let me go into the cool, sweet water; for my head is all on fire! And my baby! my fatherless baby! Oh! let us bury ourselves under the billows! My Ro!—my Ro!—Jeptha!—Jeptha!—my Ro! my Ro!"

They got her, however, safely to land; and then they had the humanity to lead her carefully through the sea-port town from which the convict ship had sailed, till they reached the fields beyond, and out of hearing of the great and terrible sea.

The wind blew fresh and wavingly over the wide pastures, now green with waving grass, and filled with red clover and golden king cups. The larks sprang aloft, singing gladsomely in the air; the herds were out in the fields, the sheep upon the hills. She had passed through the town, her head upon her breast, never once lifting up her eyes; a sailor, on each side, holding one of her arms, and followed by the man who carried her baby.

They brought her about a mile onwards, to a charming little rising ground, that commanded a view of the sweet country—of a village nestling among trees, and the hoar steeple of the church peeping forth from the branches. There they stopped.

She lifted up her head — looked round. Her eye recovered its lustre; lambent beams of light seemed to shoot into and brighten it. Her bosom heaved, as it were, with fresh life; her lips parted, as if to inhale the sweet air. She snatched her baby from the man who held it, clasped it close to her bosom, and without uttering one word, good or bad, plunged into a deep and woody lane, and was lost to sight.

CHAPTER XII.

From that time Hesther had quietly rejoined her people, and had followed their usual vagrant life. She had taken her sorrow in a fashion of her own, quietly and sternly; she never had been seen to shed a tear; she never once mentioned her Ro. When Sarah, the old mother, was giving way to the violence of her passion in curses and imprecations, threatening vengeance the most horrible, upon the author of their misery, Hesther, her boy in her arms, would stand looking fixedly at her, with a sort of wonder, mingled with scorn.

"This is not the way," her countenance

said. "This is not the way such should be mourned."

Then she would turn aside, and go alone into the woods and deep lanes, her baby in her arms, and so remain for hours. Whether at these times she wept and mourned; whether she too, in her way, meditated revenge, is unknown. Certain it is, that when the clan had returned to the neighbourhood of Castle Avon, after a wandering of nearly eight months, and that Sarah was openly employed in planning the destruction of Mr. Yates, Hesther offered not the slightest resistance to her proceedings, and she seemed to share fully in the general sentiment, that a sort of wild justice demanded a victim. That for the trifling offence, as the whole gipsy society deemed it, of stealing horses, three men should be cut off from the land of the living, not hanged, it was true, but sentenced to what, in their eyes, was almost more dreadful than death, seemed to *demand* retribution. She readily agreed in this, though she said little; and at the different consultations upon the subject, contented herself with standing there, a tall, im-

posing figure, giving to the assembly the sanction of her presence.

It was during this time that a sudden change came over her existence, threatening to darken the little light that was left in it. Her boy, as he was sleeping in her arms under a hedge, had been stung, as it was supposed, by an adder. She was wakened by his shrieks; there was a small wound upon the little bare ancle; and the child swelled, sickened and died, before the common remedies in use among these people, upon such occasions, could be applied.

From that day Hesther closed her lips in silence. In silence, she carried her baby, wrapped in a fine silk shawl, which she had purchased or filched, no one knowing how she came into possession of it, to the little grave. It was dug under a towering wild rose-tree, now covered with a profusion of sweet flowers, in the deep dingle among the hills where the gipsies were then encamped. She lifted the little lifeless form in her arms, raised it in a sort of agony of despair towards the sky, then she pressed the pallid lips with hers, now

as colourless as those of death itself; and once having touched them, it seemed as if some flood-gate of the spirit had given way: she rained kisses and embraces upon the body with a vehemence amounting to frenzy.

Suddenly she appeared to recollect herself, and recover her self-command and heroism. She brought her little one to the side of the grave, kneeled down, deposited it there, laying it carefully and settling the delicate limbs as if in a bed; then she raised herself, and stood by silent, whilst her friends and companions speedily shovelled the moulds over the body; that over, she turned round, and walked home.

She upon this occasion did as she had before done. In her desolation she sought no sympathy, she chose to be alone; she never mentioned her sorrow to any one. She went on with her usual occupations as before—telling fortunes, or preparing simples, or whatever else it might chance to be; but the slightest approach to courtship, or gallantry, upon the part of any of the young men of her clan was rejected with an almost fearful violence. For regarding her

to all intents and purposes as a widow, many sought her hand in gipsy fashion; but the proud heroine treated their addresses with contempt and horror.

Thus Hesther had for the last three months lived desolate, her heart yearning in its dreariness for it knew not what; when, as she stood by, a cold spectator of the violence offered to Mr. Yates, her eye had been attracted by the beautiful child, as he fell out of the arms of the man they were tearing from his horse. She had sprung forward, at first through the mere woman's instinct, to rescue an infant; but, no sooner did her arms enclose another—a living child! a child without defence—a child belonging to no one! a child that might be to her as her own! than the intensest of affections was rekindled in her heart.

The unfortunate Dido herself, was not more fatally and madly entangled in the meshes woven for her by the feigned Astyanax, than was this bereaved mother, as she pressed the golden-haired child of the stranger to her bosom.

The execution is over: the gipsies have returned to their tents. The encampment is situated in a sort of crater basin, sunk among the mountains, and entirely filled on all sides with trees. Tall ash and aspens rise like columns to the sky, lifting their green and waving heads above the birches, hazels and alders, with which the dingle is crowded so as to be almost impervious. The gipsies, however, have their paths through the labyrinth, and in the centre stands the encampment. It is placed just where a well of pure water, clear as crystal, walled in by stones covered with mosses, green as emerald, comes bubbling up, and steals away, creeping among the trees and long grass.

There was a rather large assemblage of gipsies here; and they passed away their time making horse-shoes, mending pots and pans, transmogrifying horses, or collecting and preparing simples, or maybe poisons, according to the customs, time out of mind, of this mysterious community. All round this basin the mountains rose precipitously, with bare and blackened rocks, between which green shrubs were growing, and woodbines and

fumarias hanging their light and lovely tendrils. The scattered huts; the horses and asses tethered to the various trees, where little open glades of grass presented themselves; the smoke from the fires curling through the green leaves towards the blue sky above; the wild and shaggy figures formed altogether a romantic and beautiful picture, which many among this half-savage race had quite imagination enough to comprehend and enjoy. And who more than Hesther? So to this place, as soon as the night had fallen, still carrying the boy upon her bosom, who, his arms clasped round her neck, had fallen asleep, she returned.

Here the storm had passed away, and the clouds were clearing from the sky. Star after star was peeping forth in the heavens. The pale light from a crescent moon cast now and then a silvery stream upon the grass and huts; but, wherever the trees grew thick, all rested in deepest shadow. One or two fires might be seen glowing red upon the ground, and sending up volumes of smoke; and the large black pots, filled with an indiscriminate mixture of game and poultry—spoil of the woods

and farm-yards in the neighbourhood—were seething over the fire, and giving out a pleasant savour.

But someway that night no one seemed in a humour to enjoy this, or anything else. The men lay under the trees, or in the huts, or lounged about listless and ill at ease: the women unharnessed the horses, put their gear aside, lifted up the covers and looked into the pots; but all with a certain air of indifference and want of alacrity. Even the very children seemed influenced by the general feeling, and were passing up and down noiseless and depressed. For savage and ignorant as they were, they were human creatures after all, and they knew that they had just committed a barbarous crime, at which all nature revolts.

It was not the fear of consequences; for so successful had they been in perpetrating the murder, and hiding every trace which could lead to discovery, that there was not one among them who felt the slightest uneasiness upon that account; but they had done a deed of grievous sin and crime; and their consciences perverted, and little awakened as they were, could not be

altogether silenced. Wandering in moral darkness as they were, the sense of their crime lay like a heavy nightmare upon the soul: not to be removed, yet neither useful nor regenerating. The old haggard Sarah, who still retained the trace of her once great beauty, sat by one of the fires in gloomy silence, speaking to no one, looking at no one; wrapt in her own thoughts.

Suddenly a figure was seen emerging from among the deep shadows of the trees—a tall, beautiful female figure. Following the path, she soon entered into the full gleam of light which shot upon the grass from a neighbouring fire. It was Hesther. She carried the child in her arms, fast asleep, and, as I told you, his little head resting against her bosom, and the golden curls of his beautiful hair falling scattered over her arm. She crossed the little green, and was about to make her way to her own tent or hut; but to do this, she was obliged to pass close by Sarah, who was sitting with her elbows upon her knees, her two hands thrust into the thick locks of her grizzled hair, looking into the embers. She raised her head as Hesther approached, and seeing who it was, started up, and confronted her fiercely, crying:

"Give me that child." And she attempted to lay her hands upon him.

"Hold back! hold back!" cried Hesther. "Touch him if you dare. Mother Sarah—Queen, if you will—touch the child if you dare!"

"I say," answered the other, with a scowl of malignity and rage, "I say the child is mine. Was it not I who pulled that wretched Yates from his horse? Was it not I that threw his carrion body into the pool? Was it not I that revenged myself—you—all of us? And is not this wretched little imp of Satan mine too? I tell you, Hesther—I don't wish to have a quarrel with you, girl—that I'd rather have that child's heart's blood than a crown of rubies and gold; for did not his father, Lord what's his name, sign, with his own right hand, the warrant that made me childless? Ah! and shan't he know what it is to be childless in his turn!"

And she again attempted to lay hands upon him.

"Keep off! keep off!" cried Hesther. "The boy is mine. He above, the Almighty, hath taken my child from my bosom; and I am more than a widow—a babyless mother!"

you know how that feels? Oh no! *You* lost a son, a big grown man; but did ye ever lose a baby?—a little, soft, boneless innocent baby? Never. You don't know what it is. And he who took one, has given me another—a baby, more beautiful than the angels of heaven, more precious than all the dark children of the Caloré put together; for his eyes are like blue-bells, and his hair is as gold, and his lips are coral, and his teeth are pearl. So hold fast, hold fast, my treasure and my jewel, and be not scared, and don't look so daunted with those lovely blue eyes of thine; for she that has thee will keep thee; and they shall tear the heart's blood from my body before they have a hair of thy head. Hesther can tell them that. Ha! ha!"

She uttered all this in a loud, mocking, defying tone, as she kept swinging herself round this way and that, whilst the old gipsy made snatches at the child. Then she suddenly darted away to her own tent, and Sarah returned sullenly to her place by the fire.

The pots, with their smoking contents, are now lifted from the embers, and each one comes with his platter and his wooden spoon. They sit down in a circle, and hands are stretched forth, and each one receives his share. But all passes gloomily—the cloud hangs over them—there is no cheerful sound of animated life, such as usually accompanies their meals—no chatting, no laughing, no appetite. Few can eat, and those who do, eat as if the occupation were a task to be gone through, rather than a pleasure.

Hesther is not among them.

She has shut herself up in her tent—has dropped the canvas door—has lighted a little candle of her own making, and is sitting upon the ground, with the boy upon her lap. He looks in her face, with an asking bewildered eye; but still without shedding a tear. The child seemed, even yet, not to have recovered his recollection sufficiently to weep.

Hesther did not understand this mute sorrow. She was delighted with his tearlessness as a proof of resolution and courage; qualities in which she, above all, delighted. So, as he

sat there upon her knee, she kept gazing upon him with intense admiration, comforting him, and saying:

"That's my brave baby! That's my fine boy! Not a drop—not a drop. They say the children of the Busné are mere milk-sops—all made up of water and hash; but thou art a hero, darling of my soul! Thou art my hero, and my prince!"

And again she pressed him to her heart, and covered him with her kisses.

The child disengaged himself, and looking seriously into her face, said:

"Who are you? I want to go to my mamma."

"Dost thou, jewel of India? Who and what is thy mamma, as thou callest her? No; thou must stay with me—with Hesther. Thou must have no other mamma but Hesther; she will keep thee safe, for the rest would kill thee. Thou must forget thy mamma, and love Hesther. Wilt thou love Hesther, fondling of my heart?"

"Yes, I love you; and you shall go with me to mamma."

And the child's face began to grow troubled,

and to darken all over, and tears were gathering to his eyes—those blue eyes, than which, she thought, the stars of heaven were not more beautiful, were beginning to be brimful of tears. She loved the brave child, who wept not; but her whole heart was melted, when his spirit at length gave way.

"Oh! don't cry! don't weep! or you'll break my heart, darling of my soul!—don't! You shall go to your mamma. To-morrow, Hesther will take you to your mamma—there. You are hungry; here is a bit of sweet cake for my soul of souls; and to-morrow you shall go to your mamma. Sleep to-night on Hesther's bosom: to-morrow you shall go to your mamma."

The child was hungry, exhausted, sleepy, confused. He ate the bit of sweet cake she gave him; and then he was so drowsy, that he soon fell asleep again. And there she sat upon the ground, sawing her body up and down, with him close to her heart, fixing her eyes upon the sleeping features, with such feelings! Suddenly she heard a slight noise at the entrance to the tent: Hesther looked that way. The canvas door was slowly lifted,

and a face with two terrible eyes—the eyes of the fiendish old woman—was looking in.

Hesther understood the meaning of those eyes better than any stranger could have done. It was as if she saw their unhallowed influence gleaming upon the baby she held. The curtain was in a short time let down, and the evil eye withdrawn; but Hesther fell into a deep musing.

"I know her well. I understand that eye as if I was in her black heart, and could read it written with an iron pen upon the rock. The child's life, by fair means or foul, that hag will have! Yes, she will have it: I know her. She will watch by the hour, by the day, by the month, by the year; but this child's life she will have! Yes, my soul's treasure! in vain may Hesther rise up early, and lie down late; watch thee with sleepless eyes by night, with restless, never-ceasing care by day! Sooner or later thy life-blood she will have! It is written in her bad, black heart—it is to be read in her evil eyes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

HESTHER laid the sleeping child upon a wretched flock mattress, in one corner of her cabin, covered him carefully with such blankets as she possessed, and stood a few minutes gazing at him, with looks of the most intense love. With such a look as fables say:

"The mother-ostrich fixes on her young,
Till that intense affection wakes the breath of life—"

Then she turned away, and left the hut; dropping the canvas over the entrance, and carefully fastening it with a skewer. She made her way to the nearest fire, round which she found, as she expected, the leaders and ancients

of the clan in assembled council, with the fierce old woman, who was their acknowledged queen, presiding. Hesther did not join them; but keeping back in the shadow, so as not to be observed, she approached as nearly as she could, and listened to their discourse.

They were, as may be supposed, in deliberation as to what was best to be done. The murder they had perpetrated with so much success that not a vestige remained, still, that Mr. Yates had disappeared would soon be known all over the country; and though they thought that it would be generally believed that he had perished in the flood, still they could hardly hope altogether to escape some suspicion. They were gipsies, whose lawless and even murderous habits were notorious; and they were feared and detested by all that country round. Mr. Yates, as was well known, had been very active in bringing the offenders of the tribe to justice; and it was believed that no gipsy ever rested satisfied in such a case, without revenge. It was therefore the unanimous opinion of the gang, to strike their tents that very night, and disappear from that side of the country. This

was just settled among the men, when Sarah, who had sat by the fire, listening in gloomy silence to what was passing, suddenly struck in with:

"Fine palavering! this danger and that danger; and what do any of you mean to do with the little imp of a Busné? enough to betray us all to the hangman. Besides, the devil's cub can speak—can peach. Do you think, when the hue and cry's up, they won't track us out by the child? ay, that will they. Go where ye will, hide where you will, the golden locks of that child will betray you."

"Well, mother, it can't be helped; the child's there, and you would not have us turn him loose," said one; "better hide him among us till this matter is blown over. Only it's a double reason for marching."

"Hide him! ay, hide him, and welcome!" said the old gipsy, with a malignant grin. "Only let me have the hiding of him; he'll not be traced in a hurry, I promise you."

"No," said a young and handsome gipsy man, who stood near her; "no—no, mother;

I, for one, have had murdering enough for one while. No, no; we won't have the baby butchered."

"You won't, won't you?" repeated Sarah, casting at him a look of unutterable scorn, mingled with resentment of his interference, and contempt of his humanity. "Nobody asked you to do it, Master Chicken-heart."

"No more chicken-heart than yourself, Mistress; but let's have no more butchering, if you please. I don't like it. I have done nothing but see spirits in the wood-shadows ever since. I declare I wouldn't go back to that water-side by myself—no, that I wouldn't, for all the world! and I used to care for nothing, not I!"

"Strike the tents, and pack up bag and baggage," began the principal man of the party, "and don't stay squabbling here. Come, Mistress, lend a hand, will you?"

But Sarah remained sitting by the fire, mumbling and talking to herself, as she was often in the habit of doing, in a strange, witch-like, mysterious manner.

Hesther crept down upon her knees, then upon her face, and like a serpent, twined herself

among the long grass, till she got close behind the old beldame, and could distinguish what she was muttering; and this, she gathered from among the indistinct sentences:

"They may do as they will, talk as they will; but that boy's life I'll have. Did they not rob me of mine? and will I not rob them of theirs! Did he not, that fine young lord, sit as cool there, as if he was penning a love-letter—writing down, what was worse than death to me and mine? Hesther's taken one of her absurd fancies to him; and she thinks—fool that she is!—there is strength enough in her right arm to defend him. Perhaps so, against any man in the squad, but not against me; no, no, not against me. I'll have his heart's blood, and lave his silver skin with it, as sure as I am of Egypt and a true Caloré. Ha!" suddenly turning round, "what's creeping there? Hesther! you adder!"

"No adder, mother; but Hesther!" said the young woman, suddenly starting up in her true shape, as if touched by the spear of Ithuriel. "Here I am. I've heard what you were saying to yourself; but mind me—and mind me; old, and mother of the clan, as you are, if you dare

lift a finger against that child, you shall rue it the longest day you live; if you dare lay a finger on *him*, fingers you will not like shall be laid on *you*. Nay, it's no use spitting fire from your eyes like a wild cat in the dark. I say, and you know me, mother; that child is mine, I love him; and woe to him or to her, who dares harm a hair of his head."

"Yours! I'd be glad to know—yours, indeed! Mine—his — hers — anybody's. How come he to be yours? I'll tell you what, Hesther, we are not going to run all our necks into the hangman's noose, to please you or any one. That child dies this night; and you may bury him yourself, if you please, under that tree; for we are not going to carry him all the world over, as the sign and the signet-mark of what has been done. Make your best of it; or so it is written, and so it shall be."

And as she spoke, she rose slowly from the fire; and with an air of determination, which had something in it of dignity, turned towards Hesther's tent.

But Hesther, uttering a screech like that of a catamountain, flew upon her; and in her

rage would well-nigh have torn her to pieces, had not others of the tribe interfered. They parted the combatants; the old woman suffering herself to be separated from her adversary, and to be persuaded to go to her tent, and prepare for her departure; but as she did so, she cast a sidelong glance at Hesther, which the other but too well understood.

And now all was hurry and movement in the camp. Horses and asses were being caught and brought in from the thickets, and were harnessed to the small rude covered carts which served the company as baggage-waggons. Wild figures of men and women were seen glancing among the trees and huts, now reddened by the glow of the fires; for the moon had gone down, clouds were rising from the horizon, and gathering over the sky: and it was becoming very dark.

Hesther wanted little light in her tent. A candle, made of the pith of rushes, dipped in tallow, served her to collect her small property; her portmanteau being a large iron pot, into which she stowed away, one after another, all her possessions. Having done so, she

carried it out to be packed upon one of the carts; and then returned for the child, who lay still fast asleep.

Again she looked at the beautiful boy with an admiration approaching to rapture, as there he lay, so lovely in slumber. His cheeks still wetted with tears, but the colour as of the Provence rose. His golden hair, in rich curls, hanging about his face and pretty childish shoulders; one waxen hand under his head, the little fingers bare and closely clenched; the other, holding the blanket, covered with a curiously-worked glove. Hesther stood gazing some time in, as I said, a perfect ecstasy of admiration: then her attention was caught by the glove, the little quaint gauntlet of leather, sewed and lined with blue silk. I know not what impulse possessed her, or what were her intentions, if she had any, or whether she merely acted from spontaneous admiration of the delicate piece of needle-work; but she lifted the little hand, and gently drew off the glove; and then from her bosom she took a small bag.

The bag had once been embroidered with various gaudy colours in a rich pattern, inter-

woven with gold threads; but now it was all dirty and discoloured; and the ribbons with which it was drawn, and which had once been white, were become a dingy brown. Such as it was, it was Hesther's best and dearest treasure; for it had been a present from her husband, who had found it in a wood, left there by some forgetful one or other. He had appropriated it without hesitation. and had given it as a love-token to his Hesther.

She put the little glove in, and restored the bag to her bosom; then she gently lifted the child, rolled him in the blankets, and laid him on the ground; whilst she disposed of the bedding in the same way as the rest of her household furniture. Sadly, she lifted the boy in her arms, and carried him forth with a proud, determined air; and leaving her tent to be taken down and disposed of by some of the men, prepared to take her departure.

"Which way?" she asked.

"Right across the mountains, and so up the valleys to Scotland. We shall be in the skirts of Plinlimmon to-morrow, and the night after towards Mow Cop, so we are diligent."

The tribe started forward; and the dingle

was soon forsaken, and left in silent darkness.

The boy, awaking in the morning, found himself in Hesther's arms. She carried him the whole of that day. The little child kept asking for his home and his mother, and Hesther, without the slightest scruple, kept assuring him that to his home, and to his mother, he was going. But, brave as was her spirit, she travelled on sadly; lost in melancholy musings, being convinced of the unchangeable determination of the old gipsy-woman to effect the destruction of this creature, so infinitely precious; and equally convinced that if resolved she was certain sooner or later to succeed; and, moreover, that once resolved was with her to be for ever resolved; for Sarah was never known to change in her purpose, when her object was cruelty or blood.

So they journeyed on, day after day; till, crossing the moorlands of Staffordshire, they plunged into that wilderness of hills and deep valleys, moors, heaths, bogs and crags, springs

and streams, which constitute, what by some have been called the English Apennines; and which is one unbroken mountainous district, extending northwards from the moorlands of Staffordshire to the Cheviot.

In one of the deepest and most desolate of the many solitudes which these hills contain, the gipsies at length halted. They settled down at no great distance from Blackstone Edge, in a narrow, lonely valley, entirely uninhabited; though at the distance of a few miles, more or less, engines upon all sides were smoking, spinning-jennies whirling, and all Lancashire and Yorkshire at work.

So long as they had continued upon the road, Hesther's apprehensions had been pretty much at rest. Sarah was busied in the occupations incident to the direction of the march, and seemed to take little heed of her or of the boy; but no sooner were they settled in their new encampment, than all her terrors returned. She had not one moment's rest. The cruel eye of the old gipsy seemed for ever upon her, watching an opportunity. The looks she at times would cast upon the child were almost

diabolical. Perhaps Hesther felt the more exposed to this persevering malignity, because the place the encampment now occupied was so bare. There was not a tree to be seen; nothing but a barren, heathy valley, shut in by black crags and hills that towered to the sky, and at the foot of which the gipsy huts lay scattered, with the horses and asses browsing round them.

The boy, in the meantime, was, as children invariably do, becoming reconciled to his situation. Hesther was indefatigable in her endeavours to please and amuse him; flattering him with the promise that he should soon rejoin his mamma, till the idea, and with it the wish, seemed gradually dying away in the infant's heart. He became passionately fond of Hesther; and this would have added incalculably, if anything could have added, to her extravagant fondness for him. Once or twice she had been in the most imminent danger of losing him; once she caught him just as he was beginning to devour a cake which Sarah had given him, and which, as Hesther divined but too well, was poisoned. At other times, the woman, like the Jew's daughter in

the old ballad, would be endeavouring to beguile the innocent she had resolved upon sacrificing into her tent, and once Hesther caught Sarah in her own, with her hand actually upon the child's throat.

The young fervid creature, so bold in action, so little used to fear, could ill brook this perpetual anxiety; she became moody, nervous, excited almost to the verge of frenzy. Sometimes she vented herself in paroxysms of rage, calling down the wildest threats and imprecations upon the old woman; at others, silent and gloomy, casting glances towards her, as if she could have killed her.

The catastrophe came at last. Many days had passed in this manner, and still the child lived, and endeared itself more and more to Hesther's heart; but day by day she became more silent and more gloomy, and as if meditating some fell purpose. And so she in truth was. Thus her thoughts ran:

"It is vain; it is nonsense; it is folly. Sooner or later—very soon, perhaps—she will be too sharp for you one way or other; sooner or later she will have thy life's blood, darling of my eyes! I know she will; but—ay, but—she

shan't; no, she shan't. One of you two must die, I see it in her face; and which ought it to be? the old hag or the young cherub—she or you—she or me? for die I will when thou diest, my heart's own, and only one. No; it shall never be said that Hesther stood by and saw such a deed done, or that Hesther wanted pluck and heart to take care of that she loved as the apple of her eye. It's a horrid, painful, odious thing to do; but what signifies that? It may be found out, and the whole tribe will hate me—let it—let them. She shan't have you—she shan't, my sweet, sweet innocent!"

This had been the tenour of Hesther's thoughts for many, many days. Alas! for her poor, blinded, ignorant, untutored nature! One night she had left the child asleep in her tent, having gone for some little matter or other, to the hut of one of the tribe. She never left the boy even for a quarter of an hour without uneasiness, and the greatest impatience to get back to him; but she had seen the old woman go into her tent, and believed her to be asleep; so she stayed rather longer than usual, talking with one or two gipsies

whom she happened to meet on her way back, when suddenly casting her eyes towards her hut, she saw, through the imperfect light of a star-lit but moonless night, a dark figure stealing towards it. She could not have shrieked if she would have given the world for it; an icy terror ran through her veins, and rage and fear rendered her speechless; but quitting her companions, she darted forward, and rushed to her tent.

Through the lifted canvas the inside of the little room was dimly visible. The child was sleeping upon its pallet; over it stooped a dark figure, a hand was on the infant's throat. Did she see it, or did she magnetically divine it? She rushed forward, and tore the arm backwards.

The head was released; the old woman turned away, and with a short laugh of defiance, extricating herself from Hesther's grasp, left the place.

To fling herself upon her knees by this side, listening in an agony of suspense for the child's breathings — to fancy she heard them *not*—then to believe she heard them— to stand up, strike a light, and in anguish

indescribable approach the bed, upon which she scarcely dared to look, were all the work of an instant.

The light falls upon the little face. It is blackened; it is struggling; it is convulsed! but, oh! joy, joy! he is not—is not dead! The delicate white throat bore the impress of the cruel gripe which one second more of time would have rendered fatal, but life was not extinct.

She lifted up her baby; she carried him gasping into the air. She sprinkled his face with fresh water from the stream; she held him in her arms whilst, poor little creature, he struggled in the agonies of returning life —that awful second-birth pang! and, when those convulsions were over, and lulled in her arms and soothed by her crooning, loving voice, the little one had fallen asleep at last, Hesther again laid him down, and casting herself upon the earth by his side, and burying her face in her hands, her courage and fortitude gave way, and she wept long and bitterly. The sufferings which the child had endured in the death-struggle affected her deeply. She sat there till long after midnight, for she could

not and would not sleep. She was summoning all her resolution and hardihood for the deed she had resolved to do. This last event seemed to have been the answer to all her doubts and misgivings. No time was to be lost, if the child's life was to be preserved—this night, this very night it must be done!

Poor creature! there she sat, abandoned to her own impulses for good or evil, with a conscience seared and perverted, yet not altogether dead, in sad confusion of moral feeling. All that was best and tenderest within her ministering to all that was fiercest and worst; the yearnings of fondest pity, and the most generous feelings of protection for the innocent and the oppressed, mingled with a hatred, the strength and bitterness of which is scarcely conceivable by those tamed and disciplined by early education, and all terminating in a relentless determination, to take the life of a fellow-creature.

By the light which she still kept burning Hesther looked at her hands, those beautifully formed, but large, strong, nervous hands; and then she clenched and grasped her fingers together, as if to try their strength. H

teeth were fast set, her eyes distended, her cheeks pale as death, her very lips colourless; and then, she rose from her seat by the child's bedside, took one or two turns up and down, as if to gather and concentrate her resolution, left the hut and made her way to Sarah's.

It was a wild, howling, mournful night. It seemed to her as if evil and unhappy spirits were abroad, and that their voices might be heard in the wailing wind. Clouds were blowing up from the north, and one by one those calm luminous eyes, which looked down from heaven upon her, were being obscured. In the dim light, the dusky forms of the dark mountains which enclosed this little spot on every side seemed threatening her. A mighty power was there, somewhere—a power that summoned her to obey, and that said to her heart: "Thou shalt do no murder." But Hesther would not hear. She closed her eyes and she stopped her ears, that she might neither see nor, hear that which might arrest the course she had resolved upon.

Most of us—all of us—have, at moments

of our lives, known by experience the temptation of obstinate blindness which now beset this poor creature. God preserve us from it!

The old woman's hut was quite at the other end of the encampment, and Hesther had to pass several of the tents; but this she heeded not: her mind was too highly wrought to care for detection, still less to take any prudential means to avoid it. Every one, however, slumbered: the men, women and children within, the dogs without, the tents. The horses and asses had ceased to browse; all were wrapt in solemn sleep, forgetting the past labours of the day—all but the restless spirit, urged forward to evil by a sort of fatality—evil engendering itself.

The stars looked down in their calm majesty upon the guilty scene, but she looked not up at them; she heard only the fitful wailing of the wind, which moaned in harmony with her feelings, for she was very sad, though resolved; mourning over the execution she thought herself called upon to do. So she traversed the encampment, unseen by any mortal eye;

and she came to Sarah's tent, and lifted up the curtain over the entrance. It was so pitchy dark within, that she could distinguish nothing; but she could hear the heavy breathings of one fast asleep. She entered; and her eyes beginning to be accustomed to the obscurity, she could now observe, on one side, an unformed mass of blankets, and tattered cloaks and coverings, from whence the sound proceeded. But the obscurity was such, that she could not at first even discover how the sleeper was placed. Stealthily she crept to the side of what can scarcely be called a bed —not with "Tarquin's ravishing strides," but creeping like a cat—like a she-panther. When she got close to it, she could easily trace by the sound which way the head lay. The rest was done she knew not how—she never could remember how! Those few moments of her life were a blank, and remained for ever a blank; they never returned to her memory. The last thing she recollected was kneeling down, stealing her two hands under the blanket, and the feel of a wiry writhing neck. The next was finding herself stretched on the ground by the child's bed, clasping him wildly

in her arms, and covering him with a shower of kisses, as the child suddenly awakened, cried, and resisted.

The next morning, the old gipsy-woman was not, as usual, among the first to be seen stirring in the encampment. The others took little heed of this for some time; everybody else went about as usual, Hesther among the rest, leading her child by the hand. At last, they began to wonder what had become of the old mother. They were slow to enter her tent, for she was always particularly jealous of intrusion. Some went to the entrance and listened; but they heard nothing stirring: at last, one bolder than the rest, ventured to peep in.

"She's asleep still," said he, drawing his head back again.

Hesther continued to play with and attend to the child. She sat a little apart upon a heap of stones.

The kettles were set on, the community was

soon busily engaged preparing breakfast, and soon the savoury messes were smoking upon their wooden platters. Then Hesther came up, carefully fed her boy, taking not one morsel herself. This done, she went and sat down again in the old place: the little fellow played with some acorns and nuts she had given him; she, employed herself in weaving mats of ling, at which she was particularly expert. There was an air of repose upon her face, as of one who, by the execution of some bold and difficult enterprise, has lifted a load of anxiety from the heart, and escaped a pressing danger. She seemed to take little heed of what was going on, and to be lost in her own thoughts.

About two hours after, she was aroused by a sort of cry, and then these words reached her ears, accompanied by a yell of distress: "The old mother is dead!" When she heard this, she rose quietly from her seat, and still holding the child in her hand approached the encampment. The whole tribe were collected, like a swarm of bees, at the door of Sarah's tent. She went up and stood in the outer circle, not endeavouring to make her way through, as many did; but in a sort of suspension of all

life and feeling—for so it seemed to her—watching what would come next.

It was a dreadful spectacle that did come next; for they carried out the dead body, with its face fearfully distorted by the last agony, and as she stood there, they brushed close by her, and the body touched her very clothes. She saw the face distinctly—that horribly distorted face; and the eyes, which stood wide open, seemed to glare upon her—nay, sign to her! She felt very sick, and turned her head away. Nobody, however, observed her: they were all too busy buzzing and bustling about the corpse. Not the slightest suspicion appeared to enter into any one's mind. They believed that the old woman had died in a fit; for she was known to be subject to certain paroxysms, which they attributed to possessions of the Evil One, and in which she would fall to the ground, writhe her limbs, and exhibit the symptoms of epilepsy.

Common sense suggested, that in such a paroxysm she had expired, and the distortion of the features favoured the idea. So they buried her with a gipsy funeral, and without the ceremony, as one may be sure, of an in-

quest; and when that was done, the tribe, as if taking a dislike to the place, shifted their quarters, and travelled far northwards, even till they crossed the borders of Scotland.

In the wild tract of country which separates the two kingdoms, they remained for a long time; so completely out of the way, that Lady Aylmer's advertisement, and the proffered reward for the discovery of the boy never reached them. Even if it had done so, it is doubtful whether any one among them would have been found daring enough, under the circumstances, to claim it, by giving information; besides, the children of Egypt are true as steel to each other, though so unscrupulous in their dealings with the Busné.

As it happened, however, the temptation did not arise; and so the child, the darling treasure of the unfortunate Lord and Lady Aylmer, remained a vagrant changeling among the gipsies, under the care of the high-minded, but violent and guilty woman, who had conceived for him such an unparalleled affection. And what will be his fate? what will he become? the precious one!

To return to Hesther: from the moment the

distorted face of her victim had been seen by her, the whole of her inner life was changed. The hideous aspect of her crime thus presented, seemed to have awakened in her a sense of its deformity; from that time this terrible mask was ever present before her eyes, sleeping or waking, toiling or resting, it pursued her; it was the shape taken by remorse. It was only a face; but that distorted face mingled its poison with everything.

She became melancholy, and gloomy, unsociable, ill-tempered, and unamiable, which, in spite of her violence, she had never shown herself before. Bitter in her words, rude in her manners, prompt to take offence, and unrelenting when offended; she was disliked and shunned by her fellows, as a natural consequence, and so became only the more bitter and unsociable. To all alike were these humours shown, the result of an accusing conscience, which, incapable of regenerating, only irritated and fretted the spirit, consuming, as it were, the victim it could not purify. No one escaped the effects of this change except the child.

This child only appeared to be the more endeared to her, the more her affections were

hardened against every other. She loved him with a concentrated depth of passion, which is scarcely to be described; her whole life seemed devoted to the endeavour to please him, and make him happy; she toiled unremittingly to procure for him comforts and luxuries which for a child of the Caloré would not be even thought of; and she became more hateful in their eyes on account of this, than perhaps for all the rest. But she set the strictures of her fellows, upon this subject, at defiance. She was strong enough to protect herself and her treasure against the world; and now, added to her former reputation for deeds of prowess, there was something about her, which every one held in a certain dread. The strength of her passion had a kind of sublimity in it. And so she held on her course; and the boy being reared in this way, bid fair to attain a surpassing beauty and strength, and to unite in himself all the finest physical qualities of the two races.

CHAPTER XIV.

We are returned to the wild, moory, hills of Lancashire, to that region of mountains and valleys, that wilderness of barren country which lies beyond Blackstone Edge. Cotton factories are now smoking in various directions, and the long lines of dwellings belonging to the operatives, have spread on all sides; towns of immense extent have sprung up, where, about half a century ago, all was silent as the desert; and these savage tracts are become almost the most populous regions of England. Yet still, in that vast extent of country, large districts are left, unoccupied and unredeemed, of

desolate moor, craggy dell and far-stretching chains of fells and mountains; and into one of the most secluded of these fells we are now to go in search of him whose strange history I relate.

It is about three or four years since we lost sight of Claribert, heir of Avon, he was then a beautiful, blooming infant, with large blue eyes and golden curling hair, an object of the wildest attachment to the half-savage heroine who had adopted him. Let us go and look at him now.

There is a black, dreary mountain, frowning over and closing up at one end a long valley so deep and narrow, that only for a few hours in every day can the beams of the sun penetrate into it. On one side, the face of a rock of dark stone rises precipitously from the glen, seeming to render it quite inaccessible, though now and then, in various fissures of the precipice, tufts of grass and a few stunted shrubs and some scattered broken heaps of earth, and rubbish overgrown with brambles, afford a perilous footing. A little stream, clear as crystal, but looking black as ink from the nature of the ground over which it flows, wanders among

long coarse patches of grass and reeds at the foot of the precipice. Upon the opposite side, the face of the mountain, somewhat less steep is formed of heaps of black, broken stones and earth, almost as difficult of access as the other, so that it is impossible to conceive anything more lonely and secluded than the place appears—more shut out from all communication with the world. And here Hesther has fixed her dwelling.

There is a little rude hut, with walls of rough stone and roofed with sods, standing, sheltered under the rock, close by the side of the stream. The smoke is curling slowly from a chimney or rather hole in the roof, having a few clods round it, and the light blue cloud thence rising is the only object which can be called cheerful amid this dreary waste. The lonely woman is sitting upon a stone by the side of the stream, resting her cheek upon her hand and looking into the water, not as if she was in search of anything, but as if she was so deeply lost in thought, that to her outward sense all was vacancy. Her face is lean and haggard, and there is an expression in it which tells of fierce struggles that have gone on within, as if the

soul had been engaged in direct contest with the adversary, but had not, alas! conquered. The traces of intense suffering, of the wildest passion and despair are visible, but not a line which expresses that the victory over sin and sorrow has been effected. She looks gloomy, dark, and deeply melancholy, but neither softened nor repentant. Proud defiance may be read at times in her aspect, as if she knew herself to be guilty and wicked; but guilty and wicked, she repented not, obstinately resisting that conscience whose reproaches she could not escape. Were the crime to do again, she would do it again, and such was, in truth, the state of her mind.

Every feeling with Hesther was intense—whether of joy or sorrow, love or hate, it mattered not. Her mind was reflective, her principles clear, her moral sense almost preternaturally strong; therefore, the voice within spoke loudly and distinctly; and though, perhaps, the command, "Thou shalt do no murder," had never reached her in the injunctions of the Decalogue, yet a command as imperative spoke clearly within her soul; and she knew that to murder was a dreadful crime.

But she had hardened herself obstinately against the acknowledgment of that crime.

A dreadful weight! The recollection of it lay upon her soul, but she yielded not under it. She would not humble herself to repent of what she had done. She had committed a guilty deed, and she knew it; she felt the load of sin upon her spirit, but she bore it as a martyr bears the chain that is eating into his flesh—the flames that are searching his very heart—unflinchingly and resolutely.

She looked at the boy, that passion of her soul, and she thought him not too dearly purchased. It seemed to her as if to regret that which had ensured his safety, would have been to undervalue him—a sort of offence against his glorious worth and beauty. To preserve this worth and beauty undiminished—to keep him bright and unsullied, body and soul—to prevent the loveliness she so treasured and worshipped, from being defiled and degraded by associating with the brute natures around him—was what had driven Hesther into solitude, and separated her from her clan. Not that she had left them altogether, indeed—for she kept up a communication with the party

to which she had belonged—but she shunned intercourse with them as much as she could, and endeavoured to keep the boy as far as possible from contamination.

Her tribe left her very much to herself. There was something about her that none of them could understand. She seemed of another nature, and to move in a different sphere; and, as concerned the boy, they, in truth, partly shared in Hesther's feelings; looking upon his rare beauty and sweetness as a sort of sacred thing, which even among these rude people produced its effect. Strange, but most true, in such adverse circumstances, both had been preserved.

Lower down this valley, you may see the tents and huts of the gipsies scattered up and down, and their dogs and their carts, and donkeys, and rough, lean, mountain horses, intermingled, grazing upon the scanty herbage. The scene is wild, desolate, savage, and romantic. Hesther sits there, silent and thoughtful, looking into the water, and everything around her is still; but lower down, there is a hubbub of loud voices to be heard, and every now and then, a wild laugh or a savage imprecation, mingled with the hammer of the smith, as he

labours at his rude anvil; and the voices of women prattling or scolding, and of dogs barking and growling. Suddenly the noise increases, and becomes loud and menacing There is a brawl going on below. Men are quarrelling; and the sound of blows, and the outcries of women, startle Hesther from her reverie. She looks up, and then anxiously round her. Where is he? What has become of him? Ah! he is down there—he is down there among them. "It's of no use—no manner of use: he will be among them, do what I can. Charlie—Charlie."

"Here I am, mammy!" answers a clear voice from the precipice above, where the enterprising child had clambered to a place fearfully abrupt and perilous. "What do you want, mammy? Here I am."

"There! how could you get there, Charlie? You bad boy! What could lead you to scramble up there? You'll break your neck! Come down, come down instantly!—or stay! better stay! and I'll come and help you."

"You can't get up! you can't, mammy! Don't try! don't try! I'm coming down as fast as I can."

"What did you go there for? You naughty, naughty boy! Come down! Oh, you'll break your neck, clambering so! How dare you go without my leave? Naughty, wicked boy! but if I catch you—"

"Mammy! mammy!" looking down from the eminence upon which he had perched himself.

It was a little sandy platform in front of a fissure in the rock, up to which the child had scrambled, it would be difficult to say how, so steep was the precipice; but he was lithe and agile as a squirrel, spirited and fearless. He was afraid of nothing. He would dash into the mountain stream, and dive and swim like a young otter, plunging in the deepest and darkest pools, or sporting with the foaming torrent at will. He would scale the most formidable precipices, swinging himself up by the tussocks of grass or roots of trees, never seeming to know what the sensation of dizziness could mean. He would mount to the topmost pinnacle of the highest tree, and there sway about, blythe and fearless as a bird.

In every action that depended upon the perfection of agility, the little boy was, even

among the gipsy urchins around him, without a peer. He had, as I said above, the litheness and dexterity of an animal—would glide, and climb, and steal about, and through places, where it seemed incredible that a child could go.

Hesther trembled at his daring; for, bold as was her temper, the intensity of her affection made her a very coward as regarded her Charlie; but she triumphed in his successful daring, and gloried in the idea of the triumphs he achieved, over his fellows in feats of this nature.

But when his daring spirit of adventure carried him, as it had done in the present instance, beyond the limits of common safety, Hesther, irritated by her terrors, would become enraged beyond measure, and, provided no one was by, would vent her fury outrageously. Before witnesses, however exasperated, though every limb was quivering with agitation and anger, not by one word would she suffer her feelings to find vent. Not only would she suffer no creature upon earth to utter a syllable that could offend her darling, but she had never in any one instance been over-

heard to utter even the shadow of a reproof herself.

She looked upon him, it was evident, as a thing too rare, too exquisite, too precious, to be exposed to common handling; and she taught others, by her example, to respect, as she did herself, the divinity she worshipped. When no one was by, however, Hesther would, as we have said, sometimes give way to violent passion. But he, who loved her with that love which casteth out fear, and knew well, by the child's instinct, how passionately he was beloved, would sit, maybe at the top of some pyramidal larch or fir-tree, swinging about upon a branch that threatened every moment to give way, answering her agonizing paroxysms of rage and terror by his joyous shouts of laughter; and then, when it would seem that nature could bear it no longer, and the heart of the strong woman would at last give way in tears, down the tree would he glide, almost as swift as a bird might have stooped from the wing, run to her with open arms, clasp her vehemently round the neck and cover her with kisses.

Oh, then! it is not to be told what emotions swelled in that wild untamed heart. How she would strain him to her bosom, sobbing and laughing and scolding and embracing by turns, and feeling, oh with such an intensity of love! that it mocks all power of description. No doubt these unchastened denizens of the wilds, these children of untutored nature, feel, when they do feel, with a depth that our busied life of circumstance perhaps forbids.

And now Hesther stands at the foot of that fearful face of rock, in fear unspeakable. Nothing can cure her of such terror when she sees the child in danger, and she is stamping like a fury, as the sweet face of the boy is seen peering over the precipice, smiling like one of those cherub faces which in old pictures you see peeping from among the clouds; looking as beautiful, as innocent, and as heavenly. He was crying out:

"Don't, mammy; don't come up; you will hurt yourself. I'll be down in a moment, mammy."

And she is exclaiming: "You naughty,

wicked, bad boy! how *dare* you get up there? Come down this instant, or see if I don't catch you!"

And in no way scared by the passion, or the threat, of which he well knew the impotence, the little fellow scrambles down, while she stands gasping with fear, as she watches the descent. He held something in one hand, which rendered the feat more perilous, but he accomplished it, and laying what he so carefully guarded upon the ground, ran to her as usual, gay and confiding, flung his arms round her neck, almost dragging her to the ground with his vehemence, and kissing her half a hundred times, cried out:

"Naughty mammy! If you go into a passion, I'll beat you."

And then again kiss upon kiss, till he feels himself forgiven.

She sat down upon the grass, exhausted with the violence of her emotions; and he ran to the place where he had deposited his treasure, and returning, produced a young owlet not yet fledged, which he had captured from the nest.

"There were three of them, mammy. I

thought the mother-owl would never miss one; I want a playfellow so. See what a queer looking thing it is! with its great big round eyes, and its funny white puff of feathers, looking like the foam in the mill-pool. Mammy will let her boy keep the owl, I want something to play with."

"You don't deserve to keep it. Naughty boy, to frighten me so, and go into such places to fetch it! what do you want with playfellows? There are playfellows, more than enough, down below."

"They don't play as I like; I don't like playing with boys."

"What do you like to play with then?"

"The clouds, and the winds, to dance with the branches, and play hide and seek with the leaves," was the answer; "but the clouds cannot speak to me," he went on, "and the leaves cannot love me. And I want something to feed, and to put to bed, as you do me; and this darling little owl can fight me, and quarrel with me, as you do; and I can love him, and feed him, and put him to bed as you do me."

"And you'll love him better than me?"

"Oh, no, no!" throwing himself upon her bosom again, "nothing—nothing, as I love my mammy, but I want to have something to be good to, as you are to me, and to mind me."

"As you don't me?"

There was a joyous laugh for answer to this speech.

"Oh! my owl will be a better boy than his master. Won't you, my dear little wiseacre? Look, mammy, doesn't he look wise?"

"You'll love him, and take care of him for two days," said Hesther; "and then you'll forget to feed him, and he will starve, and he'll die if I don't see to it."

"No, I shan't."

"Yes, you will. All children forget everything—get tired of everything; and you are a child like the rest—but a child like the rest," she kept repeating, as if to assure herself of a fact which she did not in the least believe, for she thought him a shining angel.

"I don't forget," said the boy, fixing upon her his beautful lustrous eyes—eyes in which heaven itself seemed to dwell. "Don't say I forget, mammy. I don't forget—you are my

mammy, and there's the other mammy. No, I don't forget, and never shall forget *her;* but I called, her mamma."

"Pooh—pooh! What are you dreaming of?"

"Dreams are when we sleep. We waken from dreams — not to forget is — not like sleep. We waken, and it's always there. I remember that mammy, called mamma—yes, that I do, and how she looked, so different from you—beautiful and white—and with her kind face, and sitting upon her knee; and the glove. Ah! naughty Hesther, you haven't shown me the glove since I don't know when."

"Because you are a naughty boy; and you'll steal the glove, and run away from me."

"*I* naughty! *I* steal!" and turning his back upon her, he moved away.

"Don't be naughty now, then. What are you turning your back upon me for? What's the great harm of it after all? Who told you you mustn't steal."

"Why *you* did—you know you did. You said—I heard you—to Jasper only the other day, when he wanted you to let me go and creep through a hedge, and up a tree, and get

the pears. 'No,' you said, 'let the other boys do *that*. My boy was not born to steal.' And now you call me a thief, but I'm not a thief; and I won't, no, nor never will steal. No, not my own—for the glove is my own—but I won't steal it. I'll be dead before I'll steal."

"Well, well, don't go into a passion about it. I don't know you to-day, Charlie!"

"I am growing a bigger boy," was the answer; "and I—Mammy," suddenly interrupting himself, "what *is* Charlie? A Gorgio, a Romanee, or a Caloré? Where did you find Charlie? I heard Jasper and Mrs. Herne talking about me yesterday, as they sat over the fire roasting the eggs they got out of Farmer Robson's poultry-yard. They were talking of me and you."

"And what did they say?"

"They said that you were a fool, or mad, or worse, or bewitched, to make such a to-do about me as you did. If I were the prince of the fairies, they said, it might be something; but I was no fairy, odd as I was, but a mortal woman's child, and *that* you knew, as well as any of them.

"'Why where did she pick him up?' said

old Mrs. Herne, 'for sure and certain he's not one of us; and he's got hair and eyes the colour of heaven's blue and of the sunbeams.' She said too—wasn't that pretty?—'So, if he come from fairy-land it's not I that should wonder, only you say you know he don't.'"

"Well, and what did Jasper say?"

"Jasper said, 'No, no, you needn't ask questions, Mrs. Herne, for it's a story as well kept under the bush. But come from fairy-land, he does not, depend upon that; for his mother was a Christian woman, baptised in a church, though I believe she was about as beautiful as the queen of the fairies herself.'"

The boy paused in his narration, and his childish face took an expression of deep thought—such a look as children are seen at times to assume. At last he lifted up his head, and looking into Hesther's face, who sat there, her eyes rivetted upon him, he said:

"But I think Mrs. Herne's right, and Jasper's wrong; for I do believe that I must have come from fairy-land!"

"And why do you think so?"

"That beautiful lady all in white, with her

pink cheeks, and her beautiful white arms; and that used to hold me on her knee, and give me kisses, so soft, so different from your big kisses, mammy!—and walls! walls;—all round gold and blue and scarlet, like the sky in the evening! That must be fairy-land! Oh, it's over and over, I've heard old Mrs. Herne talk and tell of fairy-land; and it's not the first time, by many, and many, that I thought I must have come from there!"

"And so you did," said Hesther, abruptly, struck by a new and sudden terror, at the distinctness of the child's recollections, which she had hoped were by this time obliterated. As she awakened to a sense of new danger, her resolution was taken, as usual, at once.

"And so you did. Mrs. Herne was quite right! Yes, to be sure; Jasper won't own it, because he's jealous; and he can't bear that my Charlie should be the fairy queen's own fairy prince, and he only a black thief of a gipsy-boy!—but Mrs. Herne's right! Yes; all you remember happened in fairy-land!"

"Shall I ever get back to fairy-land? I want to see that fair lady in white again."

"Oh! I don't know. Who can tell?—who can tell? Yes, when Hesther's dead—yes, when Hesther's dead; but not till Hesther's dead," she added passionately. "No, no, it shan't be till Hesther's dead. She's a black, bad creature is Hesther; and Charlie is a bright angel, fairy prince of light; but he musn't leave Hesther till Hesther's dead! He must shovel Hesther into the grave, and lay the sods over her poor body, with his own dear sweet hand, and then he shall go—then he shall go back—yes, yes, to his fairy-land, and leave these villainous ones here. But if Hesther is accursed—oh Charlie! you must remember who it was for. I see her; she's always there maundering at me, and grinning at me, and nobody knows why. I wish everybody knew why. It wouldn't be so bad if they knew all; but it was for you, child! you, my angel of brightness! all for you! If Hesther's accursed it was all for you."

In this strange, incoherent way she would sometimes burst forth, and the boy would stare at her with wonder, and pity, and love. Yes, these wild outbursts of feeling deeply interested his young heart, and made him love her more

and more, with a strange, mysterious sort of feeling. Everything, indeed, around him was mystery: himself and his recollections the greatest of mysteries; and the dark temper of the being with whom he was so closely connected, and the life he led with her, all was mystery. But greater than these lay everywhere around him, and his young heart was beginning to open to a perception of them. "Where was this beautiful, unseen, but well-remembered, land of the fairy's in which he first drew breath? and why and how, had he fallen from it—fallen so deep and so low? And what world was this in which he now found himself?"

The dark barren mountains among which he chiefly wandered with the tribe to which Hesther belonged, were of Hesther's world: that was plain. There was nothing wonderful or mysterious in them. These wide-extended tracts, where chaos still seemed to reign, said nothing to his heart. The rude forms of matter which surrounded him told no tale of that better sphere of being, on which his attention, having been once turned to the subject, dwelt with such intense desire. Yes, that scene

which surrounded him was in harmony with, and belonged to, Hesther's world.

But was there nothing more? There were sweet and lovely things to be met with now and then, even here, which seemed to whisper to him of that better world, that land of beauty and goodness, that land of fairy, from which they told him he had been driven. And when such objects were presented, he now began to believe that invisible fingers must have been at work upon them; and that those beautiful beings of which he had heard tell, and of whose existence his memory seemed to recal the faint yet ineffaceable trace, had been busy in creating them.

The brook that ran coursing and sparkling down between the frowning rocks, possessed a beauty of this description; for, as he followed its meanderings from the place where Hesther had fixed her abode, he came to what were to him scenes of unimaginable beauty — where the brook ran clear and transparent as crystal, murmuring among shining pebbles; the silver trout were seen gliding, and lovely water-flowers decked the banks; or sometimes the

broken, rocky floor was covered with emerald and golden mosses, whose vivid hues shone through the gilded waters. And the little brook-lime, with its sea-green leaves and tiny blossoms of the brightest blue, the large golden-flowered caltha, which loves the wet places, and giant reeds with brown towering heads, were bordering the stream.

His perception of beauty was so keen that the child found a loveliness inconceivable in everything, and while others passed unheeding by, he was revelling in that exquisite sense of the beautiful which there was scarce an object around him too insignificant to inspire. The very grass that grew in the clefts of the rocks waving its light head to the passing wind, was to him a source of delight. The well-known lines of Wordsworth express to perfection the feelings of such a child:

"Clouds hang around us in our infancy!"

Colours! forms! sounds!—every sense was framed for the most exquisite perception of their charms. The deep blue of the harebell, the soft pink of the lychnis—above all, the rich

gold of the yellow broom were his jewels and his treasures!—fairy treasures lavished around him, and treasures none else about him perceived. The rich scent of the hawthorn, or of the meadow sweet with its wagging top; and above all, of the wild hedge-rose, were the perfumes of Arabia to him, the song of the blackbird or the throstle, delicious music; to which, stretched upon a bank covered with daisies, whilst the bee hummed at his work, the child would listen for hours. His eye fixed upon the blue summer sky above his head, endeavouring to penetrate its crystal depths, to seek the great problem of being—of what oppressed him—what he was—whence come? and what portentous meaning lay behind the varied screen of nature which surrounded him?

Let not all this be thought incredible. Such speculations, such questionings, such musings and searchings, are not uncommon in very young children of a reflective turn, especially those who live much in silent communion with nature and themselves. The great mother reveals herself, as it were, to them upon every side, and in her benignity awakens

CASTLE AVON.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "RAVENSCLIFFE,"

&c., &c.

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CASTLE AVON.

CHAPTER I.

SOME days after, Hesther was again sitting there upon the brink of the stream, watching her little boy, who was playing with and endeavouring to feed his young owlet, with which he was delighted.

She kept her eyes fixed upon him, and was sunk in deep thought. The profound melancholy of her countenance, the darkness that usually clouded her beautiful eyes, appeared to deepen, as thus the wretched woman said to herself:

"You are not worthy. That angel of ligh and you have no fellowship together. Yo are a black, wicked demon—a murderou blood-stained wretch!—and he is as fair an spotless as the white rose in its opening bu You are as dark as the howling, starle winter's night; and he is as sweet as th breaking May morning! And how dare yo fiend, as you know yourself to be—ho dare you call that cherub yours?—how da you? Look at him now! look at tho little legs and feet of his! There—he h stripped off his stockings and shoes, and h is wading in the stream—trying to catch th blue-beetles that are shining in the sun. Loo at his little legs and feet, and at his arm and hands! Are they not transparent as th leaves of a flower?—as if they were mad of wax?—waxen figures, such as I have seen —but a thousand times more beautiful tha waxen figures, or flowers, or anything else! An look at your own brown, shrivelled, withere dried-up hand and arm! Yes, that's you and that he! You are all scorched up with bad and ev passions; the very heart within you is at be but a burning cinder—one spot of fire in

pitchy night—for all within me is night—and he! he is all made up of brightness! Yes, old Mrs. Herne said well—there's the blue of heaven in his eyes, and the golden sun-ray in his hair! And you dare take that thing—that soft, beautiful thing—in your dry, hard, bony arms, and clasp him to your breast?—to your black, black heart? And who says I shall not?" she exclaimed aloud, breaking off her reverie in a strange way, as she was sometimes wont to do, "who says I shall not? But I *will!* I will have him; I will love him; I will keep him; I will grow to him, fasten him to this heart, bad and black as it may be. Nobody shall take him away—no, no—never, never; not till I'm dead—when Hesther's a corpse; ay, then, then, not till then; no, no, not till then. Mother! queen of the fairies! fair lady in silks and satins! with your soft kisses, and your white, hands, and your gentle ways! Yes, you may cry your eyes out; but you shall not have him—no, not you. If *you* bore him, *I* saved him! If you bore the fierce travail-pangs for his sake, I did more. You brought him into the world; and then all anguish was forgotten,

for a man child was born, and your agony was turned to joy. But what did Hesther do? what did she do for his sake? She bore an agony far, far beyond the agony of travail! She bore the agony of crime! the agony of sin! Yes, she crept, in the still night, into the old one's tent, when she was asleep!—that old mother!—and she griped her hard. It was the first time Hesther had done a secret, wicked thing, but she did it for his sake! Oh, horrid, horrid thing, secretly to steal and to kill a sleeping creature, and turn a living soul to cold clay! Oh, the face! the face! the ghastly changed face! Yet she did it! Yes, she did—for him!

"Your agony, fair lady of satins and silks, in your bed of fine linen and down, with curtains of camesoy, was soon over, for your baby-boy was in your arms! Your own—own! your rightful own—own—own! But Hesther's agony is never over. Hesther's agony grows greater and greater, worse and worse; for is not that face, that changed, dreadful, horrid face always there? The boy may be in her arms—the living, beautiful boy! but he is not hers; hers he is not. No rightful

own—own—own! No blood of hers; no child of hers! And ah! whilst she clasps him to her poor heart—that heart that has burned itself to a cinder for him—he has no blood of hers! he is not of hers! Hesther knows herself to be a wicked thief, that has filched her treasure; but she will *never* let him go! Come here, child. Come, as you are, all dripping out of the water; come and kiss Hesther—a good big kiss! Let me dry your little limbs, all running down with crystal water, against this burning, burning heart. Come to me, Charlie! Come to me—come to Hesther! Come out of the water! Do you hear? Come to me!"

"Mammy! mammy! what do you want?" scrambling out of the brook at her call, his limbs glistening with the streaming water, and looking like an opening rose-bud, all bedropped with dew. "Here I am; what do you want?"

"I want you! I want you to come to me, Charlie!" catching him in her arms, and straining him to her bosom. "I want you to call me mammy. I *am* your mammy, ain't I?"

"Yes, you're my mammy — you're my mammy."

"And Charlie loves his mammy?"

"Don't I?" giving her a thousand fond, playful, childish kisses. "Don't I? I love my mammy very much—as much as that—as much as that—and that—as much and more than all the world!"

"But you'll run away from your mammy. They'll tell you to run away from your mammy, and then you'll go."

"No I won't. I'll never, never, leave you, tell me to go who will. But who will tell me that?"

"Mrs. Herne, Jasper, perhaps. The lads —the boys."

"No they won't; and if they did, I'm not going to *go*. They may bid, but I won't go. They may 'tice me, but I won't go. No, mammy, I'll stay with you."

"But suppose—suppose, Charlie, somebody came and said they'd take you back to fairy-land, to that fairy queen so white and beautiful; you'd leave your poor, cross, black mammy then?"

"But I wouldn't—I wouldn't!" and his

heart swelled, and he began to sob. "What do you say that for, mammy; my poor, black mammy! Yes, you are black, and you're poor, and you're cross, sometimes; but, mammy! mammy! I'd be dead ten times over, before they should take me from you."

"What! not to go to the white lady?"

"What do you plague me about the white lady for?" cried the child, impatiently. "I love *you*."

And at such times, Hesther's heart bounded with a joy unutterable; all her jealous pangs subsided, all her remorseful scruples vanished like a dream; and a voice within would exclaim exultingly:

"He's mine! he *is* mine! He's not hers. Blood is not blood; it's no more than water! He cares not for *her;* he loves *me!*"

And her resolution never to restore him would become stronger than ever. Those moments of joy were, however, but as the fleeting gleams in a stormy sky. No sooner did she see the child again engaged amid the springs and flowers, restored, as it were, to that element of purity and beauty to which he seemed to belong, than the old feelings were revived; to

be succeeded by agonies of remorse, if she found him mingling with the gipsies, surrounded by children of his own age, depraved, coarse, and cruel; for then, her excellent, natural understanding represented but too violently the fearful hazards to which she was exposing him, amid the sin and pollution that was there.

Then the crime she was hourly committing, in thus withholding the child from his parents; the cruel injury she was inflicting upon the being she so loved, by the degradation to which she exposed him, would present itself with a painful intensity. Her agonies would be dreadful, but alas! without result. She wrestled fiercely against her convictions; and every struggle with conscience, with that voice of rectitude which still spoke within, only ended in a more desperate resolution to keep him in defiance of everything. The moral dangers to which she thus exposed him were indeed awful. Whether these people, to whom she belonged, were genuine gipsies or not, I cannot exactly say, being too little acquainted with the manners of these tribes of wanderers to decide; but, certainly, a more

thoroughly degraded set of half-savage vagabonds could scarcely exist. In the midst of civilised society, they led the life of the most barbarous and unenlightened heathens, yet without possessing those wild virtues which ordinarily belong to the untutored life of nature. They had no high imaginations, no rude feelings of honour, no strong and generous affections among them; they were, for the most part, a set of brutal thieves greedy of gain in any form; prone to the grossest indulgence of their appetites, particularly those of eating and drinking, and addicted to all the petty vices incident to low gambling; they were quarrelsome, covetous, grasping, envious, and malignant.

These evil tempers might be more or less discernible; and, among some individuals, more favoured by accident or nature, faint signs of something higher and better in feeling might be found. But the exceptions were rare; in any case, it was merely a matter of degree. And it was to this mass of corruption, of the very lowest kind, that Hesther was knowingly exposing the lovely child! Knowingly; for she had in her a native sense of superiority,

which taught her the fearful wrong she was committing, not only by withholding the child from his parents, but in the daily and hourly evils to which she thus subjected him; do what she would to obviate their ill effect.

Fearful! fearful trial!

Can he, can any one, walk unscathed through such a fiery furnace?

Yes, they can; and, more, they *have*.

But, will he?

If fine natural good dispositions, if an understanding, which even at that early age was remarkable for its clearness and depth, if a sort of intuitive perception of justice, a tender, affectionate heart, and a character that seemed quite *hungry* after good, if these precious gifts of nature can avail unassisted to ward off the evil influences that surround him, the boy will be saved. There can be no doubt that moral dispositions, as well as the gifts of genius and talent, are by no means equally apportioned to individuals upon their mysterious advent into

this world. That they should be so, neither experience nor revelation would lead us to expect; all supreme justice requires from man, is to render an account of the portion he has received.

This child was remarkably endowed in this respect. Perhaps it might be his descent, for his father was one of the most excellent of men, perhaps these boons of nature are transcendental and dispensed by a decree and rule above the regular workings of nature's appointed laws. Vain but most interesting speculations.

The child was of a social, joyous nature, in spite of the delicacy of his perceptions, which exposed him to suffer in a way his fellows never did, either in his own person or in sympathy with those around him; but in spite of this delicacy, his courage was high, his heart gay and joyous, and he loved to mingle with other boys and share their noisy games, especially those which called out bodily force and activity.

In strength he was surpassed by many others of his age, in activity and dexterity he was without a peer. Strength he was not

much called upon to exercise. There was little fighting going on among these wild lads, less probably than at our own public schools; their spirit, courage, and love of enterprise, under the rude, half-savage life which they led, evaporated in other ways. And besides this, the beautiful fair-haired child, with his clear sweet voice, his sweet gaiety, his goodness and kindness, and the refinement that hung about him as a sort of radiance, investing all he did, produced the greatest effect upon the imaginations of those around him. These rude but not altogether stupid or brutalized beings, all loved and adored him; their love, indeed, partook almost of the nature of worship. A hand was never lifted against Charlie; had it been needed, ten thousand swords, to use the sentence hyperbolically, ten thousand swords would have leapt from their scabbards to avenge him. In sober prose, twenty or thirty rough brown fists would have been doubled to punish even a look that might have threatened to offend him.

He lived among them, and yet was not of them. Bright gold mixed with, and yet not sullied, by the impure clay. There was that

about Charlie with which evil could not mingle, it rolled off as a drop of rain from the leaf of the lily, leaving not a trace behind. But the most remarkable things at present to be observed in this embryo moral life which we are describing, were an undeviating love of truth, the strictest rectitude with regard to property, and a power of moral reasoning, which elevated him to the rank of a sort of prophet in the midst of this rabble crew.

Charlie plunged in the brook, and played about and fondled Hesther; and fed and caressed his quaint pet and friend, for some time. At last, a loud burst of merriment, halloos, shouts, and laughter, intermingled, came sounding up the valley. The child pricked his ears, listened, and then flinging down the rushes and flowers with which he was amusing himself, started up, threw his arms round his mammy's neck with a force that almost dragged her to the ground, imparted an impetuous kiss upon her cheek—his custom upon meeting or leav-

ing her—and ran down the strath to the place of the encampment. There was a crowd of gipsy-boys gathered together upon a little grassy plain, formed by the winding stream, and lying between it and the mountains.

A rough-looking group they were; in dirty and tattered garments of all descriptions; mostly barefooted, bare-legged, bare-headed, and bare-armed; some with battered hats, some with old weather-stained caps, but all looking picturesque in their rude attire. All were well-made, lithe, slender, and vigorous in form; mostly with handsome, bronzed faces; large, dark, flashing eyes; and abundance of hair, black as night, hanging in dishevelled elf-locks around their animated features. There was something in their looks that pleased and displeased at once: a spirit and life, but also an expression of cunning and of slyness, in the turn of the eye, and in certain casts of the face, that was particularly disagreeable, and which contrasted painfully with the freedom of their motions and gestures. You felt disappointed; you seemed to expect that so much vigorous development of limbs and action

would be attended by a truthful and generous spirit; but it was not so. They seemed indeed as if it were their business to cheat others, and to be ever upon the watch to prevent being cheated themselves.

At the present moment, however, the nature of the *boy*, if one may say so, is in full exercise, and that of the gipsy in abeyance: the group, in the highest enjoyment, being engaged in some sport that excited their greatest interest. They are hallooing, shouting, laughing; and the yelping of their dogs, and the loud cries with which they are urging them on, show that their sport is that common sport of boy and man-nature; namely, the chase, or destruction of animal life.

Our little Charlie has run madly down the valley at full speed, and now, panting for breath, his golden hair flying from his face, which is glowing with health, and is the colour of the rose, he pushes his way into the throng, elbowing this way and that, not asking questions, but wanting and wishing to see for himself.

The rocks and stones are falling in confusion down one side of this tiny marsh,

being insterpersed with little knots of brush-wood and brambles. In front of them was a confused crowd of boys and their dogs, curs and mongrels of every degree, with a few terriers and purely-bred cockers—how come by may be guessed. All, boys and dogs, are busily employed in persecuting a young fox, which a lad standing upon the stones holds captive by a string, long enough to allow the animal to run about and hide and dodge among the bushes.

Poor little Reynard! He is in what may be called in his prime of cubhood—not a little cub, and not a full-grown fox; he retains his charming look of fun, slyness, cleverness, and yet *ingénuité*, to use the French word, which renders his face at that age, perhaps, the most charming one in the animal creation. His beautiful long brush drags upon the ground, as now he runs to this side, now to that; now pauses for a moment, and peeps out from among the stones, brambles, and yellow-broom, as if seeking for help, or hoping for mercy.

The yellow broom flowers topple over his pretty nose, the blue-bells and pink centaury

are wagging their heads among the stones around him, and the sun is shining so sweetly and beautifully upon that side of the scene. Upon the other are the savage boys and their cruel and excited dogs; all rushing forward, with loud yells and shouts, to tear the pretty, intelligent being to pieces.

The full force of the contrast struck upon the child's lively and tender imagination at once; and darting from the circle, he rushed forward, crying out:

"Oh, don't! don't! Let him be! let him be!"

But the boys were far too deeply engrossed in their sport to listen to the voice of remonstrance.

A loud laugh greeted Charlie's cry of distress, and "Get out of the way! get out of the way, or you'll be worried, too!"

And at the moment half a dozen dogs, urged by the voices of their masters, sprang furiously up the bank. The little fox dashed away, and cleared the mountain face before them, for one brief moment he escaped, the next the string pulled him back. The boy who held him in custody shouted with ferocious glee, as the poor

little victim fell backward, and the dogs flew upon him.

"Oh, don't! don't! Let him go! Loose the string! Let him go! Oh, they'll tear him to pieces! They *are* tearing him to pieces! Vincent, Sterne, Roberts, let him go! let him go!" the child shouted desperately, scrambling up the rocks, and with reckless valour flinging himself into the very midst of the furious dogs, vainly hoping to snatch the victim from them.

"What are you about? Keep back! keep back! keep back!" one of them shouted from behind him. "They'll be upon him! They'll worry him! They'll tear him to pieces!"

And as if moved by one general impulse, the boys rushed up the steep after their dogs, enchanted by the brave child's intrepidity, and hastening to rescue him from the imminent danger to which he was exposing himself.

It was a scene of the wildest uproar and confusion for a few minutes. Nothing could be distinguished in this crowd of boys and dogs, who were struggling, battling, yelling, shouting, and screaming.

Then in the midst of the tumult the crowd opens a little, and gives way to a wild and beautiful figure, hair streaming, eyes flashing fire; dashing down the steep, holding the rescued creature in his arms.

The dogs pursue him furiously—savagely. The gipsy-boys, screeching and screaming, hurry after, shouting to the dogs to keep back, and rushing forwards to save their favourite.

They succeed. At last the storm subsides. Each dog has been brought to reason and obedience to his master's voice; and the hubbub ends in a sort of grumbling, discontented silence upon all sides.

Charlie has seated himself upon a stone on the opposite side of the little plain; he is gasping for breath, but he still holds the fox fast. He keeps his muzzle clasped in his hand, for the ungrateful little beast is making unheard of efforts to bite his deliverer.

The other boys, followed by their dogs, are wandering over the meadow in a slow, lounging, discontented manner—vexed to have their sport spoiled, delighted with the bravery and hardihood of the child, angry that he should have

rescued the fox, yet consoled at finding the animal still a captive.

"It's too bad, I declare! What business has he spoiling sport? What a fellow it is! why, the dogs were like lions. There's nothing that lad fears; why should he? What can hurt *him?* he's a fairy child. Fairy child or not, he shall not spoil our sport, and that I'm agoing to tell him, and get my fox back. I'm glad it didn't get off, at all events."

Such were their remarks, as some of them lounged idly up to where Charlie sat, and then one of the boys began.

"Charlie, my fine fellow! how come you to spoil our sport in this fashion?"

"Because I thought it a very cruel, and a very unjust sport. What had the little fox done? And a dozen dogs against one! that's mean and cowardly, I think, and unjust too, I call it."

"Here's a fine fellow! justice to a fox! Whoever heard the like of that? What are you going to preach about next, Master Methodist? last time it was a cock we mustn't throw at; something in that, there might be, inasmuch as chanticleer never hurt any one but

hisself. But now it's a fox! Well, I suppose if a roaring lion came amongst us, we mustn't touch him."

"It's not a roaring lion; and if it were, he ought to have justice," said Charlie, hugging the fox closer to his breast, who had now ceased to struggle, and sat there, his sharp eyes fixed upon the speakers, as if listening to what could be urged against or for his defence. "If he *were* a lion, he ought to have fair play."

"Fair play! you're always talking of justice and fair play, as if anybody cared for fair play."

"I care for it, and you care for it; and we all care for it!" cried Charlie, with enthusiasm. "Gipsy lads you are, all; but that's no reason. You know what fair play is, and why shouldn't you do it, by beast or man, one and all, for that's what I call noble and true."

"Where did he get all his big words, I wonder?"

"Oh! the fairies come and tell him them in his dreams. Ain't it so Charlie? Where do you get all your grand notions, little lad?"

"Come, give me the fox," said the boy who

owned the animal, "and let's have done with it; and I'll forgive you for spoiling sport. Keep down, Badger," to his dog. "Yes, twelve to one *was* unfair odds, I'll own so much, any how."

And he came forward to take possession of the fox, but Charlie held back and squeezed the creature the tighter.

"It ain't yours! Give him to me—do you hear?" said the boy, angrily.

"No, it ain't mine—I know it ain't mine—but it's not yours, perhaps, either. How did you get it?"

"What business is it of yours, how I got it. Give it to me—give it to me, I say. Do you hear? I'll give you a good 'un upon the head, else."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Do with him? what I like."

"And what will you like; worry him, and torment him, and be cruel to him?"

"Worry him, to be sure. What is a fox good for, but to make fun of?"

"Then you shan't have it, to make fun of," and turning suddenly round, he was about to set the animal at liberty; but the thought

flashed across his mind that then all the dogs would be upon him in a moment, so he held him fast, and said:

"Only look at his funny, clever face, and his eyes! Why he looks as if he was smiling. Don't worry him, Ben; make a pet of him. If you'd give him me, I'd make a pet of him. It's not like a man to worry a poor little dumb creature like this."

"Not like a man!" said Ben, contemptuously, "why what do men do—don't they badger-bait, and bull-bait, and bear-bait, and fight in the ring, and—"

"Well, it's not like what I call a man, if they do."

"And what are beasts made for, if we mayn't make sport out of them?"

"I don't know what they're made for; but this I know, I wouldn't, if I were a big boy, hurt a poor little dumb animal—no, not for all the world. So don't, Ben; let this little fox alone, and—"

We shall be tired of this childish pleading, to which I feel that I am not doing justice. This time, indeed, Charlie did not probably speak with his usual eloquence, for Ben was

not to be persuaded. In the meantime, the other boys, tired of the moral argument, had taken themselves away, they and their dogs, in pursuit of some other diversion; and the two boys were left alone, so intent upon what they were saying, that they did not for some time perceive it. At last, Charlie, looking round, spied his advantage and turning his bright blue eyes sparkling with triumph upon great, heavy, big Ben, he said, abruptly breaking off the colloquy:

"Now promise me you will not let him be worried again, or—"

"Or what will you do? for I won't promise you anything; but this I'll do, I'll set the dogs upon him the moment I gets him to myself, see if I don't—and that because you plague me so about him."

"You will, will you? Say that again."

"I will—that I will, and I'll swear to it if you like."

"Then this is what *I* shall do," cried the child, exultingly; and opening his arms wide, he released the fox, who speeded like lightning across the grass, and was out of sight among the rocks in a moment.

Big Ben turned pale with anger.

"And this is what I'll do—*now*—" doubling his ponderous fist with a gesture as if with one blow he would annihilate the delicate being before him.

"No, you won't—no, you won't!" the child repeated, calm and unflinching, not even moving himself on one side to avoid the blow, but confronting the young ruffian with a serene eye and unblenching cheek. "No, Big Ben, you won't hurt *me* because I took the part of the unfortunate."

"I could find it in my heart to kill you," muttered Big Ben, dropping his hand and turning away sulkily.

"Oh, you're a great, big, rough fellow," cried Charlie, springing after him, and twining his arm round that of the young Hercules. "Oh, you're a great, big, rough fellow!—but if your wrath is like a lion, a n't you generous as a lion?—generous to a little lad like me, as the lion was to the little dog, Big Ben, ain't you?—ain't you? And, now, you won't be sorry a poor beast is got safe and happy home?"

"You've such a way with you," said the

strong one, stooping down, and with his great, rough hand caressing the little boy's head and its golden, silky curls, "you've such a way! Generous! that's one of your words. Do you think the brute of a Big Ben *can* be generous?"

"He is — why shouldn't he? — Why shouldn't he be a noble, brave fellow, such as I want him to be?—one who wouldn't hurt a fly, yet would fly at a lion. That's what Big Ben ought to be; that's what he will be."

"I don't know for that; perhaps he might if he had a little fellow like you always at his elbow, to conjure up the good in him, if there is any good. But its main little there is of that same, I'm afraid; and when you're gone back to Hesther, I'll be as bad again as ever. Why does she keep so lonesome and out of the way? However, I *am* glad the poor beast wasn't worried, after all."

CHAPTER II.

THE simple event above related, laid the foundation of much which seriously influenced the boy's after life. In the first place, it was the beginning of a close friendship between Big Ben and Little Charlie—a friendship which Hesther, in spite of the cruel torments of her jealousy, could not witness without a certain satisfaction.

Big Ben was the Milo, the Hercules, the strong man among these rude gipsy-boys, and Hesther, who could not help trembling for the very existence of the precious and delicate being exposed to the rude contact of these hard and savage natures, looked upon the protection he was now certain to obtain as an assurance of her darling's safety.

She therefore stifled the envious pangs she felt, and looked on with patience when she saw Charlie happy and excited, playing round the great rough boy like some delicate spaniel about a big water-dog; or sitting by him upon the grass, on the side of the coursing brook, his little arm locked in the huge one of his companion, prattling away, lifting up his blue intelligent eyes, and fixing them upon the face of his half-surly, half-pleased friend. In truth the child had already began to exercise over Big Ben the same strange fascination which he possessed over Hesther; and, as the wild affections of the one were rivetted upon him with a measureless intensity, so over that heap of heavy clay—this great animal of a boy—the voice, the eye, the winning manners of a creature so different, possessed a strange power. In the heart that lay hidden within the bosom of that rude unformed Colossus, there were stirrings of life; faint throbs of emotion they were at first, but gradually they strengthened; faint beams of light, too, broke amid the darkness of the intellect, casting gleams and shadows, and revealing forms till then quite obscured and unperceived. The voice, that voice which first

awakened chaos, and called forth harmony and beauty from the dull elements, was breathing upon the uncouth mass. That precious voice now found utterance through the eyes, in the sweet lively tones, and the engaging loveliness of this good and innocent child; and a spirit was awakened within that wild untutored gipsy bosom, a perception, faint though it might be, of new and better things—of goodness and of beauty.

The first action of little Charlie after the release of the fox had been one of great moral loveliness, displaying at once his sense of justice, his admiration of what was right, and his own generous spirit of self-sacrifice. Struck with the conduct of the once harsh and too often cruel boy, the child after he had parted from Big Ben, retraced his steps up the glen in deep meditation.

His thoughts had taken another turn, and the fox being no longer the object of compassion and interest, his attention was turned to his late master. He began to think of the loss Big Ben had sustained, and to measure, by the intensity of delight it would have afforded him-

self to possess such a favourite, the extent of the sacrifice to another.

He began to doubt whether if he had restored the little sagacious rogue to Big Ben, he would not have done what was more right and good-natured, than in thus letting him go. The child's conscience was puzzled between his humanity and the affectionate esteem he began to entertain for his companion.

"I wonder whether Ben is very sorry—as sorry as I should be if they took my little howlet away—my dear little howlet,—perhaps he is."

So he went on thinking, and pitying, and dissatisfied with himself, because he could make no compensation to Big Ben. All at once a thought struck him, and he stood still as if thunder-struck.

Oh yes! that would do—that would compensate to Big Ben. But should he? could he? Could he bear to part with it?—his queer little howlet, which he intended so to love and play with; the friend and companion of his solitude, and the object of so much adoration to his warm untutored heart. Should he?

Yes! yes! he would—that he would; and he started towards home as fast as he could.

First thoughts are best when they are generous; second thoughts are but too usually those of prudential calculation. First thoughts are of the heart; second thoughts of the head. He seemed afraid to trust himself with reflection; he hurried rapidly on.

Hesther was still sitting upon the stone, leaning her back against the solitary tree. She was looking down the glen, watching impatiently for his return. He never left her but she was in terror for his safety—a vague sort of terror, for which she did not attempt to account, and to which she yielded without resistance, just as she did to every other feeling, good or bad, as it arose. She was never easy when he was long away, because she lived but in his presence, and also she was in continual dread that something might arise to part them.

She had remained there restless and impatient for some time, and was just about to rise and walk down the glen to look after her Charlie, when she saw him coming flying towards her. She opened her arms, as she was

wont to do, to receive him, but instead of flinging himself as usual upon her breast, he passed her, and hurried to the place where he had built himself a kind of cage to hold his little owl.

"What are you going there for? I thought how it would be," she began angrily; "you can't think of Hesther now. You've no eyes but for your howlet. I wish with all my heart it was drowned in the stream. I've a good mind to wring its neck, haven't I? Ever since you've had it, you've loved it better than me.

"See how he's hugging it!" she went on half aloud to herself. "Did you ever see anything like that child? Why, he's crying over it, I declare! What a heart of love it is," she added with a sigh; then more loudly, and with increased irritation, she went on, "Pretty fellow, you are, crying for joy, to see that nasty beast again, and not a word for Hesther!—not a word for Hesther, and you away, I don't know how long."

The child's heart had been too full for him to pay attention to anything; he neither heard nor saw any object, but that upon which his

whole soul was intent; but these reproaches reached him, and turning to her, with his eyes swimming full of tears, he said:

"But, mammy, I do love him so."

"I know you do—a little foolish beast! Well, well, children must—but let him alone now. What are you going to do with him? Can't you come and have your supper? Why can't you let him alone?"

"Oh, mammy, mammy! Oh, my little howlet! my little howlet!"

"Well, what a fuss you are making about your little howlet. Of all the days in the year, why make such a to-do about him just now?"

"Because—because I'm going to part with him."

"Part with him! What's in the child? Nonsense, your little howlet! No, no! If it's because you think I'm jealous of him, and hate him—why so perhaps I may be, and so perhaps I do. But I'm a bad creature, Charlie; Hesther's jealous of everything. Never mind her; don't heed it! Part with your

little howlet that you loved so! and all to ease poor Hesther's heart! No, that you shan't. You *are* a darling to think of it. But don't think of it again. Part with it!" she kept repeating, her heart quite melted. "No, that you never shall do for me!"

"It's not for you, mammy; though I'd give it you *first* if you liked it; but you don't like it; it's for Big Ben."

"Big Ben! And how come *you* to be so thick with Big Ben? I doubt whether he's a proper companion for you, my own jewel, for he's a bad boy."

"Oh! he's not a bad boy; but a good, generous boy. Only hear, mammy."

And then, still holding the bird fondly in his arms, he came to her knee, and with great fervour, his eyes sparkling and his bosom heaving, related the history of the fox, concluding with:

"And so I will give him my howlet. It is all I have in the world, and I'll give him my howlet."

There was a strange light in Hesther's eye, a passionate admiration of moral worth—that

passion which, so long as it continues to exist, seems to redeem the darkest nature.

"And you'll give it him?"

"Yes, I will—I will. But I must go now, mammy; don't keep me now. If I don't do it at once, I can't do it."

"Go, go!" said she.

And the child turned away and went upon his generous errand.

"Big Ben," he said, as he went up to that hero, who now indolent and moody as some heroes in repose are apt to be, was sitting upon a tussock of grass, plucking idly the herbs which grew around him, and sunk, apparently, in no very agreeable reflections. He was indeed thoroughly out of sorts, for he felt *ennuyé* and dull, that most insupportable affliction to people of his class of life, who but rarely exposed to feel it, endure it when they must, with peculiar impatience. "Big Ben! What are you doing, Big Ben?"

"Doing! What should I be doing, who have nothing to do? Thinking what a fool I was to let you have that fox, and turn him out so. I should have been playing and

amusing myself if I had the little fellow now. I'll tell you what," he added, getting up in great ill-humour, "I didn't serve you out for it then; but I've a good mind—"

"It's not because I'm afraid you will serve me out," said the little Charlie, "for I'm sure you won't; but it's because I, who never had a pet before, know how sorry you must be to lose yours: so I have brought you mine, which I hope you'll please to take, and love it, and be as happy with it as I used to be."

"You're not going to give me that howlet!" said Ben, opening wide his big, black eyes.

"But I am; and you're welcome to it! You'll like it very much! It's so droll and pretty; and, perhaps—perhaps, Big Ben, when you've got it, you'll let me come now and then to look at it, and feed it?"

"You're not a going to give this ere howlet to me!" Ben repeated, still keeping his eyes wide open with amazement.

"Yes; pray take it!—to make you amends. Here, this is the way to hold it. Don't hurt it, Ben, with your big hands—poor little thing!"

"*I* hurt it! I touch it! I take it! I'll be

d—d first! *I* take your howlet from you!" cried Ben, his huge chest heaving with emotion, and an odd moisture coming into his eyes. "I take it! Well, but you are a good little fellow, to come now and bring your only treasure, the thing you love best in all the world, and offer it to me! Why, there's a something in it, Charlie, I don't know what, but it seems — And hang me, if ever I'll let boy or man plague you or contradict you again; never believe Big Ben else! No, no; take your pretty, funny bird back again, and love me a bit, that's all!"

And in this simple manner the friendship between these two apparently incongruous beings began.

So soon as Hesther learned how Big Ben had received her little boy's offer, she was delighted with him; she thought nothing too good for him; treated him with the greatest cordiality, and could even resign her Charlie to him for hours, so grateful was she that her child's

feelings had been spared, and he, made happy again.

This friendship produced permanent effects. Under the protection of Big Ben, Charlie was inclined, and Hesther suffered him, to visit the encampment much more frequently than he had been before accustomed to do, and to associate more with the other gipsy-boys.

The moral contagion to which she thus exposed him, she thought less of; satisfied that he was quite safe, so far as personal security was concerned, under the care of his doughty friend; for she was herself becoming more and more gloomy and melancholy, more than ever addicted to solitude, and indifferent to everything. The crime she had committed seemed to hang like a heavy weight upon her conscience; a fearful darkness pervaded her soul, in which she groped with a dim perception, almost ignorant of the extent of the sin, the remembrance of which pressed so heavily upon her heart. Incapable of that repentance which would have been to her a renewing, and a regeneration, her remorse seemed to be devouring her by inches, without producing any real change or improvement. Every day

she became more self-absorbed and more morose, till the voice, even of the charmer, seemed to have lost its power. The intense interest she had felt in the moral welfare of her little boy seemed to be changing into indifference and apathy. She loved to indulge her morbid melancholy in solitude, and left him to take his chance. A fearful chance it was! among those uncultivated and vicious barbarians. But she seemed content now, contented so that he came back to her at night, and she saw him safe and sound.

This was a fearful change for the worse, as regarded him. And now the tide of evil began to set in strong. Evil companions surrounded him on every side; all the vices to which that form of savage life is prone—a life not carried on in the wild freedom of nature, but exposed to the corruptions of civilised society, without its attendant antidotes—flowing round him like a flood.

What will become of him? Is it possible that he can escape? Can beneficent nature, however rich and lavish her endowments, suffice to shield him from the mass of bad which

besets him in every form, and upon every side?

But we must leave him, and return to his mother and Hernana.

CHAPTER III.

A CHARMING creature, was Hernana, as I have said. So thought her father, so thought Lady Aylmer, so thought Philip Gorhambury.

The life Mr. Lovel, Lady Aylmer, and Hernana lived, continued much such as I have described. Mr. Lovel wore the same shabby hats and coats, in spite of all his daughter could do; and would not, even to gratify Lady Aylmer, be persuaded to lay out one shilling upon himself, unless in matters of indispensable necessity. And, as he had a contempt of appearances, which amounted almost to a fault—and was, indeed, the only fault that could be discovered in him—this indispensable necessity

had often been long evident to other people, before he could be persuaded to acknowledge it himself.

Hernana and Lady Aylmer had recourse to numberless little feminine contrivances to remedy the disorder of his toilette. Sometimes a coat or waistcoat were surreptitiously introduced; sometimes the battered hat disappeared, and a spruce beaver was found upon the peg in its stead. The coat or waistcoat was usually put on without observation; probably the change was unperceived. The new beaver could not so easily escape; he would take it down from its peg, sweep it with his coat sleeve, turn it round, fit it upon his head, look rather discomposed and discomfited in it, search about for his old favourite, but that not being to be found, would at last go forth with the stranger upon his head, looking so half-rueful, half-ashamed, that Hernana could not help laughing.

The whole time of this good man was spent in the indefatigable discharge of his professional duties. The city of G—— was large, and had been long greatly neglected, both by its clergy and its municipality. Mr. Gorhambury's parish

was a very extensive one, and comprehended some of the very worst quarters of the place. The sum of crime and misery, of ignorance, vice, disease, and sorrow, of ill-conduct, mistaken views, barbarity, darkness, and perversion, accumulating under such circumstances, is immense. One only effectual remedy has as yet been found, or according to my persuasion, ever will be found to this array of evils; namely, the efficient preaching of the Gospel. Other blessings will follow, I am persuaded, as a matter of course. But it is vain to attempt permanently to improve the condition of the poor by any other means.

All your lecturings and teachings, and cultivations of the intellect, and taste for the beautiful; even your thrice and ever blessed, and to be praised sanitary reforms, will prove vain, so long as man is but as the beasts which perish, without accountability, and without a future. With these, be his condition what it may, he is still a man; a noble, exalted, spiritual being, lifted above himself by communion with the All-wise, and All-good. Deprived of these, be he in a palace, or a dungeon;

ruling an empire, or grinding at the mill; his is a poor, futile, maimed, mutilated existence, robbed of its true distinction—the Infinite.

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!"

The oyster may exchange the sentiment with the infidel. Incessantly did Mr. Lovel labour at this great task; his days were spent among the dwellings of the forlorn, and wretched, and darkened creatures. There were so many; such numbers upon numbers; such hosts upon hosts. It was as if one would exterminate the flies or locusts of plagued Egypt. But he laboured perseveringly and unremittingly, nevertheless. Oh! he would not that one of these little ones should perish. And countless were the souls he saved; or, if this be thought too presuming an expression, countless were the souls he restored to a better life, and to a higher destiny; countless the death-beds of poor, weak, miserable sufferers, that he elevated, and consoled by the idea of the divine sympathy; countless the sinners that, having first humbled, he brought into submission to the Divine Master; countless the drunkards that

became good and happy fathers of families; countless the slatterns and the scolds, who exchanged their languid indolence and their peevish irritability, for industry, cheerfulness, and contentment. Long, long, he worked, an ill-requited and obscure labourer; but the savour of these labours mounted on high.

The great ones of this city, at last, began to perceive that a good agency was at work. The obscure Curate became an object of attention. His advice was asked, his suggestions attended to, means were furnished for more extended good. This was his recompense here, a high and delightful recompense. When he saw sewers cleansed, and habitations repaired, the blessed light of heaven, the blessed breath of heaven, and above all, the living springs of pure God-given water pouring where all had been darkness, filth, and disease, he *was* repaid. Did he care for hats and coats whilst he was doing this? Too little, perhaps. But his Hernana and his Louisa cared for *one*, who cared for every one on earth but himself.

Economy, however, was the order of the day with them all. Lady Aylmer's desolated heart found its best consolation, childless widow as she was, in administering to the wants of the wretched. She made herself children of the children of misery. She did not, it is true, carry her charitable penuriousness quite so far as Mr. Lovel. A certain elegance and beauty in the life which surrounded her seemed indispensable to her well-being, necessary to maintain in her that serenity of spirit which is required for all successful labour; but the luxuries the superfluities, and above all, the ostentations of life, she despised and defied.

Hernana loved order, and beauty too; but she loved generosity, and a Spartan contempt of ease and luxury still better. She profited by, and preserved, a happy medium between the sacred indifference of her father and the perhaps too sensitive dependance of Lady Aylmer upon externals.

Now I think it is time to make you acquainted with Philip Gorhambury.

Mr. Gorhambury, in secret—a very dissatisfied and unhappy man, took up his abode at the Castle, where he continued to live with the exception of those portions of the year when he was in residence. He was a prebendary of the cathedral, as well as rector of the largest living in the city of G——. Uneasy and irritable, he seemed to be under the influence of some maledictory bann, yet everything he touched appeared to turn to gold. He, therefore, became exorbitantly rich; but, as too often happens in such circumstances, all seemed to become blank, tasteless, and onerous, till even the grasshopper was a burden.

What a priceless treasure is a rich, large, loving heart! What dire penury lies in a cold, unsympathising, selfish temper. What are your heaps of gold to such a one? They are apples of Sodom, indeed! Mr. Gorhambury knew that he had been guilty of a very base, dishonourable action—a crime, as regarded the will—a false deceit, as related to the proofs

offered of the child's death; and therefore, before the tribunal of his own conscience, he stood a miserable, degraded caitiff. He felt, and he looked as he felt, that he was in spite of all his external wealth and show, a miserable, degraded being. But worse for him, even than this, his heart was utterly shrivelled up. One has heard of such hearts, no larger than a hazel-nut — incapable of expansion, as of warmth—of the generous glow, as of the generous swell. What can life offer to such? what can wealth do for them?

He was become incapable even of feeling pity. He was so miserable himself that he envied everybody. The very beggar who begged an alms at his gate he envied. His was naturally an envious nature; and to the envious all sympathy with his fellows is denied, except with those more unhappy than himself.

And who more wretched than Mr. Gorhambury? No one.

He could take no pleasure in relieving those, with whom he would almost have changed places. To increase happiness affords no joy to

the envious man. That large field of delight open to the wealthy is denied to him.

Mrs. Gorhambury was not a person to call forth higher and better aspirations. She was an excessively talented, superior woman. Genius she had not, but everything else, to an extraordinary degree—ingenuity, talent, cleverness, industry indefatigable.

Her paintings, her sculpture, her carvings in wood—even her very needlework, when upon that she condescended to employ herself—all alike exceeded anything ever produced by amateurs before. She had, likewise, a very extensive knowledge of languages; and, for a woman, very considerable erudition as a musician, in which, whether as a composer or performer, she was most remarkable.

Such accomplishments commanded the admiration of everybody, and were a source of great pride and satisfaction to her husband; but they were *too* much. All life seemed absorbed by them. There were no spare moments for sympathy and confidence; none of those dear and tender dawdling fireside hours, which fuse heart in heart. Even had Mr. Gorhambury's

heart been capable of such fusion, the occasion never presented itself. Mrs. Gorhambury was absorbed in art, and in art he took not the slightest interest.

The accession of fortune which had proved so barren and unprofitable a gift to him, had to her become a source of great enjoyment. The abundant means thus furnished for the cultivation of her talents, the power it gave of commanding the society of all the most eminent in the several circles of the arts, were enjoyed to their full extent. She improved rapidly, wonderfully; her productions in every way fully merited the admiration they were sure to receive. But what was all this to the dreary spirit of her husband? loathing, as he did in his diseased frame of mind, the very sight of the objects upon which so much pains and time had been expended.

One pleasant chat—one tender inquiry—even one melancholy murmur of discontent—one good hearty falling out, would have been something—a communion, a relief.

And how was it as regarded the only son of this all-accomplished woman?

The mother exercises an influence incalculable upon the son. The mother may almost be called the destiny of the son.

Upon Philip Gorhambury, the effect of his mother's character and pursuits was great, and the character of the results very dubious.

He inherited much of her delicate perception and fine taste; her talents seemed to descend to him. He drew extremely well, and his love for music amounted to a passion.

From a mere schoolboy he had been celebrated for his performance upon the only instrument he then cultivated—his own matchless power of musical whistling; but, as he grew up to manhood, he chose others, and became with little pains a first-rate performer upon the violoncello.

His mother delighted in those talents, and encouraged them by every means in her power. By her example the young man was taught to love poetry rather than wisdom—beauty than usefulness—art than politics. The cultivation and worship of beauty was his religion, as it was hers. Even the Almighty God above us

was to be worshipped in His "revelation as the Beautiful."

Such habits of thought enfeeble and imperceptibly degrade the mind. It is a pagan worship after all. The sublime—the pure—the light of lights is not there.

Philip grew up elegant, refined, full of delicacy, accomplishment, and outward attraction; but susceptible, self-indulgent, with no bold, generous, or manly aspirations after the higher good as regarded himself, and still less as regarded others.

How different from Hernana—the very contrast to Hernana! Was it for this reason that they loved each other? Upon her side, perhaps. She had few opportunities for comparison. Philip in talents, accomplishments, elegance of appearance, and, above all, in a peculiar sweetness and delusive tenderness of manner, far surpassed everything she had ever seen, or even imagined. She admired him, loved him, worshipped him.

But this admiration and idolatry was the secret of her heart. She had not revealed it even to her friend and second mother, Lady Aylmer; no, nor to her father. There was a

something in the manner of both when speaking of Philip Gorhambury, which chilled her and forbade confidence. She felt persuaded that they did him the greatest injustice; and had for some reason or other taken a prejudice against him; but her consciousness forbade her endeavouring to overcome this prejudice. She said nothing, and her secret was not in the least suspected.

Philip upon his side, had liked Hernana from a child. There was something in the energy and sublimity of her character—her frank and faithful truthfulness, so different from himself, and yet which he loved beyond words, as boys and men of somewhat feeble characters are prone to love the girl or woman upon whom they can lean.

As she grew up, her fine, classical form, her open-spirited, intellectual countenance, called forth his highest admiration. Inferior to him as she was in her social position, he took the greatest pride in her—he never saw her without a feeling of elation. She was such a noble creature! Once or twice he had spoken of her before his mother, and his mother would acknowledge that the form of Hernana was perfect

enough to rival the antique models; but then she would add a few words of contemptuous pity for the narrow education she had received, her deficiency in accomplishments, her ignorance of art, and the oddity and narrowness of Lady Aylmer's ideas—she too who had pretended to form her.

"Really, it is a pity," she said upon one of these occasions, "for Mr. Lovel, though he is only your father's curate, was born a gentleman, I understand, but Hernana is more fit to be a housekeeper than a gentleman's wife. She is not even accomplished enough to take the place of an ordinary governess. Mr. Lovel is very poor, I believe, but what could Lady Aylmer be thinking of! However, she is an odd, obstinate sort of woman — I know that from your father. But, good heavens! Philip, what are you about? Why you are painting your sky apple-green!"

"I took the wrong colour. Somebody has jumbled all the colours together. Everything is topsy-turvy—what a fool!" And he tore the picture he was beginning from the easel, and was about to cast it into the fire.

"Dear Philip, what are you about?" said his mother, "you can easily obliterate your mistake —see! It is done already," added she, passing her experienced brush over the apple-green sky. "This is a beautiful beginning—there the light a little too much broken, perhaps; but really it does you infinite credit upon the whole—your perception of art—"

"Art be d—d!" said he roughly, "I am sick of art and of everything."

His mother stared.

"What can you be thinking of?"

"Sick of it all—of everything! Sometimes, mother, I ask myself what is the use of all this? What purpose in life does it serve, making pretty pictures to hang upon walls, which not one in a hundred looks at, not one in five hundred understands, and not one in ten thousand cares for? It's all very pretty—very pretty; but, oh! how cursed tired of life I sometimes am!"

"That distaste of life," said his mother, quietly, "is the scourge of genius. Who has not felt it, in their moments of discouragement and anxiety? All feel it. There is no escaping

from it. But beauty is not the less beautiful because there are moments when our very sense and perception of it seems dead. The immortal works of Grecian art remain for ever—the endowment and admiration of the universe; though—"

"Though what?" said he, impatiently. "Mother, it's a great humbug, after all. Who is the better for the Apollo or the Laocoon?"

"Nay, if you talk so absurdly as *that*," said she, resuming her pencil, "I can have nothing to say to you."

Of course he believed, as everybody else feels bound to believe, that he was very absurd when he ventured to propound such ideas—ideas, however false, which will present themselves, when life in its intensity presses upon us.

"Well, mother, I beg your pardon for speaking evil of your gods. It's all my own stupidity and ill-humour. But, oh! this Castle! this Castle! it is to me, at times, the very cave of spleen — the den of the demon of *ennui*. There are moments," said he, looking round the room with an air of indescribable

disgust, "when I could take up all these fine things, and make a bonfire of them. That would warm one, at least, for once in one's life."

She continued her painting in dignified silence. Such nonsense was unworthy of a reply.

He sat there some time sullen: ill-temper is apt to take that turn, when it does not get answered. He kept watching her indefatigable pencil, till he lost all patience; at last, he suddenly looked up, with:

"Any commands for G——? I am going to ride over to G——, mother."

"What do you want at G——?" she asked, without lifting up her head. "You cannot be back to-night."

"Oh yes, I shall; and if I am not, don't fret about me. No commands? not a little inch of a ribbon I can get for you?"

"No, no."

"*Addio*, then—*addio*," said he, with a sudden return of spirit and gaiety. "And here, mother of mine, is a kiss upon each cheek; one, to plead my excuse with the

Apollo, the other with the Laocoon. And now that I have jumped up from my chair, I am ready to vow what you will in honour of every hero or deity that ever was chiselled."

She took his kisses coldly, not playfully; but he did not seem to care, for his head was full of new thoughts, as he ran merrily down to the stable-yard.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. GORHAMBURY, though he had so completely given up his clerical duties, still kept his living at G——, and resided there a certain portion of every year. So that Philip had always a *pied-à-terre* in the city, where he very often took refuge when he found the solitary Castle in the mountains intolerable. It was indeed placed in a very wild and secluded situation, and almost reminded people of the Castle of Udolpho.

There was the usual solemn and quiet society in G——, which is common to most cathedral towns. But though the dances and parties were never very lively, there was often excellent

music to be had, a peculiarity also common to cathedral towns, where the affairs and interests of the choir keep the subject uppermost in most people's minds.

There were many amateur singers among the gentlemen of the place, who gave the music of the best masses and that of our own old masters, and good living ones too, with excellent effect. Philip had a charming tenor voice; there was something of the tone and pathos of Rubini in his singing; and his assistance was ever most welcome in these agreeable evening concerts. Few indeed could hear him sing without emotion, for he did it with a truth, feeling and simplicity, which made its way direct to the heart, to say nothing of the handsome and expressive countenance, which gave fresh sentiment to the words and tones he uttered. He was a dangerous man among the young ladies of G——, where staid, middle-aged, married men were plenty, but young ones like Philip, rare as the Phœnix. Indeed, the part of Phœnix he might literally be said to play at this time, for there was not one man in the place who could in the least compare with him,

either as regarded personal or mental accomplishments.

Many a young lady sighed in secret, but sighed in vain, for the charming Philip Gorhambury; but not one could flatter herself with being the object even of a preference. There was a gaiety and gallantry—nay, something more—a touch of sentiment about him, which might have flattered and beguiled many a one; only these things were so generally diffused, his attentions so equitably distributed among his favourites, he professed to be so deeply in love with at least half a dozen fair ones at once, that it was impossible for the most obstinate self-delusion to persuade itself that there was anything approaching to real partiality for any one among them. They were consoled, these young ladies, as young ladies and all the world besides are apt to be, by the conviction, that if not fortunate themselves, no one could boast of better luck.

This pleasing idea was, however, a mistaken one, for there *was* one, whom Philip Gorhambury never mentioned, never praised, about whom he never made any of his wild professions of pas-

sion; one who seldom appeared at any evening parties, and when she did so, mostly sat by, disregarded, for she was only a poor curate's daughter, and the belles of the city scarcely condescended to notice her.

Philip rarely spoke to her in public; a ceremonious bow was the usual salute; perhaps a sentence or two might now and then be formally exchanged, that was all. Yet, some way, though no one noticed the coincidence, when she was present, the tones of his sweet and passionate voice were more thrilling, more intensely pathetic than ever, and the lovers of music would wonder at and applaud the sudden inspiration, while she sat retired, like the Egeria of old, shedding her influence, hidden, and unperceived.

But she of old was in a less dangerous situation than poor Hernana, for she dictated, but was not a witness of the effects she produced. She escaped, perhaps heart-free, perhaps not. It was Hernana's fate, however, to sit a silent and entranced listener, to tones which she knew were inspired by and addressed to her alone. One look directed to the corner where she

sat, one expressive, momentary glance, would tell her to whom all this world of beautiful sound was dedicated.

But now he is mounted upon his noble black horse, with shining coat and waving mane and tail, and hoofs that seem almost to scorn the ground; and he is bounding over the hills alone, drinking in the sweet mountain air, his bosom swelling, his intellectual brow dilating with thought and feeling—delicious, as they are high and pure.

He was of that peculiar temperament which responds like the chords of some fine instrument to the harmony which is around him, and his heart constant, affectionate, and true, trembled with happiness as he thought of her to whom all his fond aspirations are devoted.

He has loved her all his life, he loves her still with a true and honest love—for herself. He knows not why—he cares not why—he loves her because she is Hernana.

Hernana is truth, energy, nobility of mind, reason, action. She is all this; but he loves

these things because they are in *her*—not her because she is all this.

He loves her; that is enough. And like the carrier-pigeon needing no compass, by the instinct of *love* steering direct towards home; so Philip Gorhambury bounds over the hills, riding an unconscious steeple-chase, of which Hernana is the goal. He mounts a steep ascent, and then looks down; and below him in the valley lies the town of G——.

The grey towers of the cathedral rise in the midst with the full light of the sun upon them. The various habitations, intermingled with trees, lie there nestling among the hills, the broad majestic river rolling by, the green meadows with their herds and flocks, and hedge-banks, and rows of pollard-willow stretching far upon either side—a wilderness of houses, and trees, and fields, and gardens—how beautiful! He checked his horse, and looked down upon the scene; at first, filled with enthusiasm by the extreme beauty of the picture, and then beginning to endeavour to distinguish well-known objects. The place where he stood commanded almost a bird's-

eye view of the city. He could see the cathedral close, with its rows of elms and oaks, and distinguish the Deanery perfectly well. Then his eye travelled to the denser parts of the city, where thickly crowded houses, narrow lanes, small courts, and all the evidences that these were the tenements of the very poor presented themselves. This district was, however, traversed by one large and wide street of handsome houses, in the midst of which he could, even there, perceive his father's, as more lofty and imposing than any other.

It had tall ornamented chimneys and a high flight of steps, and a door with a Grecian pediment and pillars. He fancied he could see even these.

His father's church-steeple, a noble spire, rose at some little distance, from among this wilderness of squalid dwellings. Near it, his eye searched long.

It was difficult to distinguish the small obscure dwelling he sought—with its garden before and its garden behind—which was situated close by the churchyard. At last he thought he could single out the little green plot by one

particular tree—a poplar tree it was—which rose like a giant not far from the garden-wall. Having settled this point, he seemed satisfied; and dismounting from his horse, prepared to lead him down the steep descent before him.

He reached the bottom of the hill, then he vaulted into his saddle, and plunging among the narrow lanes and courts, made his way to the well-known little gate.

A boy of his acquaintance, son of the sexton, was accustomed to take charge of Philip's horse when he came this way. He now summoned him, and put Alcaster into his care, charging him as he valued his life not to mount himself; and then walked by the side of the brick wall which enclosed Mr. Lovel's little domain, till he came to the narrow high iron gate which closed the entrance to it.

He peeped through. The house Mr. Lovel occupied was the old parsonage; far too inconvenient for the requisites of modern luxury, as the Rector regarded them; and, therefore, it had been given up rent free to the Curate.

It was an old low building of dark brick, with

pointed gables and casement windows, almost overgrown with ivy, pear trees, and creepers of various descriptions, which Hernana had trained up against the walls. It had a small court in front, occupied by a grass plot, which was equally divided by a paved walk running from the gate to the house; behind the house there was a somewhat larger space, occupied also by a grass plot, upon which grew a dwarf cherry tree, two small plantations of some dozen sycamores, laburnums, plane, and lilacs, on either hand; two flower borders, with a gravel walk between, running the whole length of the garden; and, on each side, the ground laid out as a kitchen garden of very slender dimensions.

The back garden was fenced in by privet hedges, cut, and pruned, and trained, till they exceeded the height of a tall man; the front was surrounded by the high wall of dark, coloured brick, of which I have spoken. The tall poplar tree growing outside, cast its shadow over the scene.

It was a somewhat gloomy, yet not altogether unpleasing place; and Philip loved it dearly. There was a charm about the quiet old house,

which belonged not only to the present, but to the past; for he remembered well the wife of a former curate regaling him, a little child, with dainty cakes and rich cream in this very garden, before Hernana and her father had come to live there.

The churchyard, opposite to which the iron gate opened, was quite deserted, and Philip could stand at his leisure and look through unobserved.

He wanted to find out whether Mr. Lovel was at home or not. Much as he liked the daughter, the father was not in the least to his taste. His neglected dress; his dawdling, indifferent manner; the serious, almost severe, character of his virtue; each and all found something in Philip Gorhambury with which it was impossible they could harmonise.

He looked and peered about. The casement of the parlour window was open, and a throstle in a cage was singing and whistling there, evidently quite at its ease, and probably by itself. The window of Mr. Lovel's room above was likewise open, and no one to be seen stirring there either. He put his hand upon the

latch, opened the gate noiselessly, and stole into the garden.

There were no dogs to be apprehended as giving alarm. A cat whisked through the bushes; she was the only inhabitant of the sort, except the throstle. There was not food enough in the *ménage* to provide for such pets, as dogs. So he made his entrance unobserved; and first he went to the parlour window, and looked in, but the parlour was empty. Hernana was not there as usual, writing or sewing. Then he followed the path which led to the back of the house, and upon which the eating-room—for it scarcely merited the name of dining-room—and the kitchen window looked.

The casement of the eating-room was closed; but that of the kitchen was open. To it he stole; and hidden by a flanking white rose-bush, which, with another of rosemary, grew close by, he peeped in.

Cobbett, in one of his wholesome books, execrating the potato as the bane of all domestic industry, and magnifying the good brown loaf, draws a beautiful picture of a fine active

young woman, drawing her bread out of the oven.

But tastes differ. For there are tastes which are simple and wholesome, and tastes which are perverted and vitiated; or as some, on the contrary, would have it, tastes are refined, or tastes are vulgar.

Philip, the elegant child of fortune, and reared to fortune's notions and refinements, peeped into the kitchen; and there he saw —what think you? His dark Spanish beauty; the Hernana of the glorious shape, the large dark eye, the ebon hair; the enchantress, in short, whom he had in fancy attired in mantilla and bugle flowered petticoat, with a shoe so neat and delicate as to set the world on fire when stepping along the Alameda, employed— how?

How was Dulcinea del Toboso employed, when Sancho was sent to her with a message— stringing pearls?

The kitchen was, as always, a perfect Dutch

picture of neatness. The sanded floor, white as snow; the large kitchen table as emulously fair and clean; the little shelves, shining with bright copper vessels, or with rows of old china; where figured sundry strange figures, bowls and jugs, most rare and antique. They had belonged to Hernana's mother, who had been a Spaniard.

The fire blazed cheerfully in the grate. Before it was a low fender, shining like silver, and upon a little square of crimson carpet that here covered the floor, lay a large tabby cat, reposing in all that domestic quiet comfort of which a reposing cat is so perfect a type. By the fire, in an old-fashioned arm-chair, dressed in the primitive style which one now sees no more, with a quilted black petticoat, open gown, snow-white apron, handkerchief quaintly crossed and pinned over her bosom, and a curious construction called a cap, white as swansdown, upon her head her feet resting upon a footstool, sat the old house-keeper, as complete a figure of comfort and repose as the cat herself. Her cheek was pale, and she looked ill; and that accounted for the ever-busy housewife being at rest, whilst

her tasks were performed by another. For there was a kneading-trough resting upon low tressels in the middle of the room, and there, kneading the bread for the family, was Hernana. Her beautiful arms were bare, her sleeves rolled back, her hair somewhat in disorder, a few raven locks escaping over her neck, and her cheek a little flushed. She was kneading away with all her might, little thinking how she looked, and only anxious to save the dear old dependant from fatigue, and make her father some good bread.

Mrs. Alworthy groaned aloud, as she sat there reposing, uttering many a lackaday! and welladay! to which lamentations Hernana, lifting up her head, would answer with a cheerful encouraging smile; and then return to her work, and knead on with the utmost industry.

And there stood the fastidious Philip gazing at her. And as he gazed, his heart was filled with strange emotions. She looked charming! she looked beautiful, even then! and he had it but too strongly impressed upon his heart how far more beautiful she could look at

other times. But there was something in the employment which offended his taste, his false and somewhat tinselly taste. Something in her dress so common!—in the whole scene so vulgar! vulgar!!

Base and most inapplicable word! He was the vulgar one—not she. He, who was insensible to the moral beauty of a magnanimous simplicity — to the loveliness which lies in the detail of domestic life, however humble, when love and generosity are the elements in which it subsists.

And yet, meretricious as were his tastes, it was impossible that the little scene should be without charms for him. The reposing old woman; the beautiful energetical and simple figure of the girl.

There was a witchery in it. Where did the charm lie? Why could he not tear himself away? He thought he disliked the whole thing. It vexed him to see Hernana thus degrading herself; yet, strange contradiction! he loved her more so than ever he had loved her before. He was angry, yet enchanted!

Oh, simple, unconventional life has a magic in it!

He stood there, watching her. The woman groaned, and moved uneasily. Hernana wiped the dough hastily from hands, and flew to her, and shifted a cu that lay against the back of the chair; soothed, and comforted, and kissed her, returned to her occupation again.

He could stand it all no longer. He kn at the window. She lifted up her head. the scarlet colour flew to her cheek; then she seemed ashamed of having ashamed; and then, stripping the dough her fair fingers, she laughed merrily, and to the casement and unclasped it.

"Wonders are never to cease!" sai half-vexed, yet half-pleased. "I see you taken up a new trade to-day."

"Yes. Poor dear Mrs. Alworthy, there, with the rheumatism; and bread *must* be you know."

"There are bakers in the town, I s think," he said, rather contemptuously.

"But it is cheaper to bake at home."

"Cheaper!"

"Yes, cheaper. I pray you, don't pronounce that word in such a contemptuous manner. It is the most esteemed of qualifications here."

"Yes, I know it; and sometimes, perhaps, regret it. The sordid, in no shape, is lovely—never amiable—seldom right," added he, peevishly.

"Sordid!" she repeated, a little hurt; then added—"A necessary economy is never sordid."

"It is absurd to talk in this way, Hernana. I know your father is not rich, but I also know that numbers of girls whose fathers cannot be better off than yours, would scorn to stoop to these sordid—yes, sordid! I can find no other word to express my ideas—these sordid occupations!"

She looked down for a moment.

What woman, however strong her character, however noble her notions, however high and pure her sentiments, can withstand the humiliation of appearing low and degraded in the eyes of the man she loves?

She may be fully sensible that he is wrong, and that she is right; that he is conventional and vulgar, and herself heroic and high; but she is unamiable in his eyes! and that is enough.

How many an honest duty has been sacrificed at this shrine of a false divinity! How many men with their shallow and tinselly views of female excellence, have given a wrong direction to many a loving heart!

She looked down, to blush, and feel her heart sinking, with a cold mortified sense of being abased in her lover's eyes. But this was not the first time that she had met with mortification where she knew she deserved esteem—and felt that the noble sacrifices made by self only met slight and contempt from men.

The world is made thus. The common sort value us more for what we do for ourselves, than for what we sacrifice to others.

Many a time before had something in Philip's manner, when she had been making some abnegation of this kind, humbling herself to the most lowly tasks, denying herself the most trifling piece of personal adornment, to save a shilling

or two for her father, often and often had his manner, pained and perplexed her, yet she had continued to persevere.

Her heart was of so high and generous a temper that every new pain seemed only to add force to her resolution, and stimulate her to persevere in the path of self-denial which she had chosen for herself.

Yet every recurrence of these little scenes of discontent on the part of Philip, gave her intense pain: she so loved to please him; and so longed for that appreciation upon his part, which she felt to be her due, and which is the sweetest, sweetest recompense upon this earth, to a woman—the assurance the he she loves, at least does her justice.

"I think," she said, lifting up her eyes, and looking at him with that grave serenity and strength, which he felt so irresistibly charming, "that you are unjust, Philip, when you call these things sordid in me; sordid seems to me to mean a love of sparing for sparing's sake—a love of money for money's sake, and the accumulation of it by paltry means; a love of low employments, because incapable of taking plea-

sure in higher. Does that cap fit me, or mine, Philip?"

"No, certainly; and it is because you are capable of what is higher, that it angers me to see in you a sort of strange perversity—for I repeat it—I never see other young ladies kneading bread. Look at your fists," said he, half-laughing, and still half-vexed, "are they fit for a drawing-room? A labourer's cottage, say, rather."

She held them up.

"I don't see much harm done as yet," she said, with simplicity.

"As yet! No, perhaps not, as yet! But how long is this to go on? And how do you think Molly the cook, and Betty the housemaid, get their coarse, red paws, but by doing just as you do? I am sure, Hernana, if my mother were once to see you, as I see you now, it would disgust her for ever."

"I should be sorry to disgust any one; most of all a woman of Mrs. Gorhambury's fine taste; yet to gratify taste we do not altogether live. —we must not altogether live. There is a line in the Catechism, Philip; it served me as a child,

and it serves me still—'to do my duty in that state into which it hath pleased God to call me.'"

"Pooh, nonsense! This line may be used as you use it, to justify any eccentricity. We shall have you talking of the rights of women next, I suppose."

"I don't think making bread was ever considered an undue exercise of the rights of women. Come, Philip, don't be cross; don't be vexed with me for doing that which you know I ought to do. Forgive me if I offend your taste, dear Philip, and do me the justice to believe it is no love of eccentricity, but a sincere desire to do my duty unswervingly, just as it comes. And," in a lower voice, "the poor thing is in such pain, I cannot let her do anything herself; and really we cannot afford to keep another servant, except for the very roughest work. Kneading the bread is so cleanly and so nice, you should not object to that, you know."

It was such a sweet, fervent, persuasive voice; it would have rived, to use the old proverb, a heart out of a stone. It was all-powerful with him. He thought she looked

so majestic in her simplicity, so gentle in h self-assertion and dignity.

He leaned against the window-sill and co tinued to look into the room. The evenin was closing fast, and as the shadows deepen outside, the cheerful brightness of the litt apartment became all the brighter, the fi throwing up its flickering blaze and flashin upon the coppers and china. He felt in h poet's soul, that which all poets feel, t invincible charm of nature.

"You look very comfortable here," said he.

Her countenance brightened, there was qu an effulgence upon it when she was happy.

"You think so. *I* think so. There something in a little quiet kitchen like t which has great delights for me. I am luc different from people in general, I believe really like these little comfortable places think if I lived in a great wilderness of a pa I should be lost. Sometimes at the Dean it seems almost a labour to get from end of those two large drawing-rooms to other. If they are not filled, they look desol and if they are filled, what a crowd it is! C

or two friends, over a nice, cosy, blazing fire like that; is it not comfortable?"

Philip said nothing. Her countenance was so speaking, so animated whilst she said this—the scene so exactly as she described it, there in all its peace and comfort before him. He could almost have wished his fate had consigned him to the same simple life she seemed to love, that necessity had forced him down to such a sphere, with her by his side. But necessity had done no such thing.

We cannot voluntarily degrade. He felt that. The more easy solution of the question, which in some form or other was now almost always uppermost in his thoughts, was to elevate her to the place by his side. For without her by his side, what was life? But then what would his mother say?

CHAPTER V.

But now the door of the little kitchen opened, and Mr. Lovel made his appearance. He had been hard at work that day, among the very lowest of his parishioners; he was excessively tired, his shoes and his gaiters were bespattered with mud, his hat was more worn, and his whole appearance more slovenly, not to say beggarly, than ever.

Philip looked at him with unmixed disgust. He was dirty, positively dirty! shabby, mean, eccentric! What an absurd contempt he indulged in for all the proprieties men are accustomed to respect.

It angered Philip to see Hernana turn

round, fly to her shabby-looking, and, as he thought, disgusting father, clasp him fondly in her arms, and imprint a kiss upon each cheek, exclaiming:

"Dear, dear papa! how tired you do look! and no bread baked for your supper! What have I been about? Only stay a moment, and I will fetch you a loaf from the baker's; but sit down first," and she put him into a chair by the fire, and then kneeled down and began to unbutton his gaiters, and offer to take off his dirty shoes.

"Oh, Miss Hernana, let me do that!" cried Mrs. Alworthy, offering to move.

"Be quiet, will you? and sit still! Dear, dear papa! how tired you do look!"

She, kneeling down and handling those bemired shoes and gaiters! This was to make bad worse with a vengeance. He drew back from the window disgusted. But it was soon to return again, He was bewitched! she had thrown a spell upon him! Do what she would —disgust, displease—she was Hernana still!

Mr. Lovel *did* seem extremely faint and tired. He sank back in the arm-chair in which

she had placed him; his colour faded; a wan blueness spread over his temples; he looked so wretchedly ill, that even the hard heart of pride and fastidiousness was touched.

Philip looked at him with some interest. She stood there gazing at her father, with a face in which love, reverence, tenderness, and anxiety were blended. Then she suddenly snatched up her bonnet, which lay upon a table near, and prepared to leave the house.

Philip was at the door before her, and met her there.

"You are not going out alone at this time of the evening?"

"Yes I must, do come with me; see how ill he is. He went out but poorly this morning—but what can keep him from his duty? The fever is about, and there are many, many—oh, so sick! and miserable! But he must have brandy now; he has been all day in those fever holes. Oh, how could I be so forgetful!"

She hurried on, Philip following in silence.

She came to the next public-house and entered without a moment's hesitation.

Philip's feelings are indescribable as he stood

at the door, not going in, but looking in, and seeing this angel of light and purity invested with a panoply, as it were, of virtue, entering this den of dirt and depravity, where two or three brutal fellows were laughing, smoking, and drinking. She hastily asked for some brandy, paid for it, and flew back to her father.

Rapidly she seemed to flit, rather than run along the streets; he following, but she did not appear to remember him. She was only thinking of her father. She opened the door of the house, and went in—Philip following; but he stood at the door of the little kitchen, as he had done at that of the gin-shop, not entering, but looking in; whilst she flew forward, quickly prepared a little brandy-and-water, and presented it to the pale lips of Mr. Lovel.

"Brandy!—no, my dear!" he said, drawing back and shaking his head.

"You must—you must! I was told so yesterday by the medical man at Lady Aylmer's —oh, how could I be so careless!"—she said, "when you came back, faint and sick, from those dens of misery and pestilence, that the

best thing to preserve you from the fever, [illegible] a little hot brandy-and-water. Take it—[illegible] it, dear, dear papa!"

He took a little, though unwillingly, [illegible] said he perhaps should be the better for it.

"I feel ill," he added.

The old lady had risen from her chair [illegible] had hobbled up to her master as well as [illegible] stiffened limbs would permit.

"Yes, I am sure, Mr. Lovel—my dear mast[illegible] you are ill: you have taken the fever. Oh, la[illegible] aday! lackaday!"

"No, I hope not—I trust in God, no[illegible] cried Hernana.

The young man still kept standing at [illegible] door, offering no assistance, engaged watching the scene; it excited in him su[illegible] strange, contradictory feelings.

He could not be insensible to its mo[illegible] beauty; for Philip, whatever else he mig[illegible] be, was poet enough to have much mo[illegible] taste. And yet, at the very time that [illegible] admired her piety so much, there was something displeasing to his pride, and fal[illegible] fastidious refinement in the whole.

He had at times indulged himself in the romance of dreaming of Hernana his wife. But to take a wife is, with men of his stamp, a very serious matter indeed. They have not heart enough to invest the idea with all its world of tender sympathies. With him, affection was a matter more of the imagination than of the feelings. He was at sad division with himself; sometimes he would, sometimes he would not; just as his fancy veered about. It never once suggested itself to his mind, that by this indulgence of his wayward temper, he might be trifling with the happiness of another. What he felt he expressed; and when he felt nothing he kept away. She only saw him when under the influence of tender sentiments; it is not to be wondered at, therefore, that she believed he loved her sincerely. He always was loving her when she saw him. She had no standard to measure the depth and breadth of his affection but that of her own heart, and her heart was all singleness and fidelity. How could she then distrust his?

She never thought of such a thing! That

Philip loved her she felt convinced; and no[illegible] whilst hanging anxiously over her fathe[illegible] she lifted up her head, and looking ro[illegible] her eye caught the figure of Philip sta[illegible] ing upon the threshold, a sudden rush o[illegible] joy, oh, so exquisite! gushed to her hear[illegible] He was there! and his love and sympath[illegible] made even that moment of anxiety lik[illegible] heaven.

She cast her eyes wistfully towards him. He could not resist the appeal; his heart was at that moment what it should ever have been.

He crossed the threshold, and with that tenderness in his countenance, which his features were but too well formed to express, said:

"Can I be of any use to you, dear Hernana?"

"He is very ill; you see he is very ill," she said, in much distress. "What is to be done?"

As she spoke, her father's countenance changed suddenly for the worse. In spite of all his efforts to keep up, and assure her that nothing was the matter with him, a livid pale-

ess spread over his face, his eyes closed, and e fell back in his chair, shivering violently in ery limb.

"You must have advice instantly," cried hilip. "Something is very much amiss here. et me run for advice. Who shall I call ?"

"Our apothecary is old Mr. Singleton; oh, go, go—run, run, dear Philip! He is very ill. Worse, worse! Oh, papa—papa! father —father!"

Philip waited not for a word more; but flew to fetch the apothecary, Mr. Singleton. He rushed down the street, and into that gentleman's small, and somewhat obscure shop; for Mr. Singleton was a general practitioner in a humble way, and his practice lay principally among the poor. He was not the less, however, a skilful and experienced man; or rather a man who knew how to profit by experience—for experience offers herself to every one; the difference between man and man is, that whilst one gathers ingots of gold from the mingled sands as they run, another distinguishes, discerns, and appropriates nothing. This by the way. Philip

hurried into the little shop, where a young man was standing behind the counter employed in preparing medicine. He looked surprised to see so fashionable and distinguished a young gentleman entering Mr. Singleton's door; and was beginning in the politest fashion he could invent, to inquire his errand. But—

"Is Mr. Singleton at home?" asked Philip, hastily.

"Yes, Sir, just come in; but he has been out since five o'clock this morning, and is sitting down to his tea. Anything I could have the pleasure of doing?"

"I want Mr. Singleton. Is this the way?"

And without waiting for permission, Philip entered a passage at the back of the shop, and opening a door, found himself in the parlour of the apothecary.

He was a small, singular-looking man; but with a countenance of remarkable acuteness. Poor man, he had just taken off his miry boots, after a journey of ten or twelve hours; and was enjoying the rest of his arm-chair, a comfortable cup of tea, a round of buttered toast, and his newspaper.

"Mr. Singleton!"

"At your service. I have not had the pleasure—Ay, ay, ay! I beg your pardon, Mr. Philip Gorhambury. In what can I assist you, Sir?"

"Oh, pooh! It's not for myself; a patient—"

"Oh, dear! oh, deary me! can't the patient wait a little? I am but just come in; I *must* have at least an hour's rest. Nature requires—I will be with the patient in three quarters of an hour."

"That won't do; you must come directly. Mr. Lovel has had a strange sort of seizure, and is—"

"Mr. Lovel is it?" starting up, and huddling on his great coat. "Mr. Lovel ill! Ay, ay! I knew but too well what it would all end in. The blessed saint and martyr! Got the fever! Ay! I'll lay a hundred pound to a shilling. Got the fever!"

He hurried into his shop, his great coat unbuttoned, and all abroad; and having quickly filled a bottle with some medicine, hastened

with rapid steps down the street, Philip following him as fast as he could.

Mr. Singleton entered the kitchen, attended by Philip, but the little chamber was now empty. Even poor crippled Mrs. Alworthy had found her way up-stairs.

The stairs opened into a passage close by the kitchen-door.

Mr. Singleton went to the foot, and called:

"Miss Hernana!"

She flew down to meet him.

Her face was flushed, and tears were upon it; her manner all distraction and confusion.

"Oh, you are come! Oh, thank you! bless you! He is very ill. What can it be?"

So the anxious, hurried, trembling voice was heard running on, whilst the old apothecary blundered as well as he could up the steep staircase, and soon his heavy footsteps were heard in the apartment above.

Philip remained standing by the kitchen fire, looking into the red embers, and in a deep reverie.

The picture of humble life before him was so unpleasant, so discordant, so inharmonious with all his ideas; and yet with a strange pertinacity, still the image of Hernana rested there, rested as something without which life, the world, all his advantages, and all his possessions, would be utterly nought and valueless.

He loved her; he felt, he knew that he loved her.

Something within him whispered that his love was a just, a generous, an ennobling love. That his preference was wise, was well-placed, was praiseworthy; that under its influence he should be a better man—should be a worthier, nobler human being; a happy man too—happy from the best and surest sources of happiness.

But then the picture had its reverse.

The reverse was made up of a host of insignificant nothings—vain trifles, which, to his false and fastidious taste, and enfeebled character, assumed a most unreasonable importance. A host of ideas, which one moment's serious appreciation of their true relative value, would have reduced to their just insignificance, kept

painfully crowding into his mind; assailing him in the weakest part, and endeavouring, as in the old legend of the life's choice, to obscure by their meretricious glare, the grave but sublime attributes of the higher one.

Strange it is, but so it is. Even when men love deeply and sincerely — even when every inclination of the heart is prompting them, when they would gladly, thankfully accept the impulse from another, they want courage, manliness, and virtue to make the better choice for themselves. It requires a certain, nay, a very considerable amount of virtue, to dare to abide by a worthy choice, and do what would be the wisest thing in the world, and which our hearts are yearning to do, when the idle voice of habit, worldly considerations, and the common course of things, are much opposed to it.

Oh! how much happiness do men hourly throw away because they have not the courage to seek it, where alone they can find it, in the unbiassed dictates of their own hearts.

Philip Gorhambury stood by that fire, gazing into those embers, divided between the sweetness of a generous well-placed love, and ten

thousand vain, weak, trifling causes for doubt and irresolution.

His mother too! What would his mother say? What would she think of it? His thoughts glanced towards his father. He would be terribly disappointed, and would be dreadfully angry, but that he cared little for and could defy.

But his mother! his clever, talented, elegant, accomplished mother! Her contempt! How could he brook her contempt?

The utter scorn and pity with which he knew she would regard anything approaching to the generous romance of life; to that brave independence of the world's opinion in matters with which the world has no business to interfere. It was not the disappointment that she would feel, the pain he must necessarily inflict upon his mother that he troubled himself about; but her contemptuous pity! her forbearance! her blighting compassion! her indignant and unfeigned astonishment at his taste.

You see how much of a heart Philip Gorhambury possessed, or rather how far his education had tended to extinguish or to deve-

lope what good feeling nature had bestowed upon him. So he stood at the fire, in a reverie, till Mr. Singleton was heard slowly descending the stairs, and he made his appearance in the kitchen, followed by Hernana.

Her hair was all in disorder, falling in fine picturesque masses about a face to which the emotions of her heart had given the noblest and most interesting expression. Intense feeling in some countenances produces this beautiful effect. This was eminently the case with that of Hernana.

The imaginative eye of Philip was struck almost with wonder, at the extraordinary beauty of the face and figure of her—who, little conscious of the effect she was producing, and far too much in earnest to think at that moment even of her lover—was in broken sentences anxiously inquiring from Mr. Singleton as to her father's condition.

The old man could give her little satisfaction. He could only exhort the young lady to firmness and fortitude; whilst she, almost heart-broken, drew from him the confession, that her father's illness had assumed a most threatening

aspect, and in short, that his life was in danger. Then she was at last overcome, and the grief which burst forth was so natural and so deep, the feelings so tender and strong, which seemed for the moment to overwhelm her, that they forced their way to the sympathies of her lover, and completely vanquished him; but some fine scene in a tragedy would have done as much.

She had sunk down upon the little bench by the kitchen fire as soon as Mr. Singleton had taken his departure, and had abandoned herself for the moment to all the agonies of despair. He could resist it no longer; all that was really good in him was aroused, he went to her, sat down by her side, took her hand, and as he tenderly pressed it, spoke, in those tones of manly tenderness and strength so dear to a woman's heart, and entreated her to take comfort.

"Dear, dear Hernana! Don't give way so Don't abandon yourself to despair! The docto told you there was hope."

She shook her head.

"Yes, he did indeed. And now, my lo compose yourself; listen to me; let us see wl

can be done, sweetest Hernana," and the ot[illegible] hand was made prisoner as he spoke. "Y[illegible] know you can command me; have [illegible] scruples—do we not understand each othe[illegible] I have the means; you will not refuse to [illegible] them?. Everything I possess is yours to empl[illegible] These fevers yield to proper treatment. Wh[illegible] shall we do first? Have you confidence Mr. Singleton, or shall I call in other advic[illegible] A nurse? Yes, you shall instantly have nurse. Good wine? I heard Mr. Singlet[illegible] say something of cordials—of keeping up My father has excellent Madeira—or perhaps claret—I think I have heard claret recommended. Anything—everything—only tell me what shall be done first?"

So he ran rapidly on; holding her two hands grasped in his, speaking in such a pitiful, earnest, feeling voice.

For a moment—it was a human, it was a woman's weakness, forgive it—every source of apprehension for her father was drowned in a flood of rapturous joy. She looked up at him, their eyes met. His were all fervent passion; hers—Oh, the depths of feeling that he read

there! It was but the infirmity of a moment upon her part, however; she withdrew her hands, and endeavouring to recover the mastery over herself and to calm the beatings of her heart, said: "Oh, thank you! thank you, Philip! What is there I would not accept for my father from you?"

And he thought as she said so, there was that in her face, that in her form, that in the tones of her voice, that never woman had equalled, and that he loved her as never man loved woman before. And he was happy, happy beyond expression!

It took little time to settle between them what was best to be done. Philip proposed, as the first measure, to send his father's physician. This she refused, her confidence in Mr. Singleton was entire; but she accepted with thankfulness his next proposal, which was to find out a sick-nurse, and dispatch her to Hernana's assistance, for of this experienced help, she felt herself to be greatly in need.

Then Philip proposed wines, and various dainties; but these, she said, were not wanted at present; but he thought to himself that

she might want them, and said so at last, conjuring her to remember her own health, and take care of herself, in accents which, though he did not exactly say so in words, expressed, that the happiness of another was concerned in her preservation. And thus persuaded, oh, with what an inward sense of joy, did she promise to do what she could, and to take the wine he said he would send her, or anything else that Mr. Singleton recommended.

And still he kept dawdling and talking, and had something more to say; whilst she began to feel that she was doing wrong; that she was selfish; that she ought to be with her father—to think of nothing but her father.

At last, he went away, and she returned to the sick bed up-stairs. Oh, what a different being from the one who had left it but ten minutes before! Treading on air! her whole being changed—strengthened, brightened, ennobled! It was as if the very atmosphere of existence was altered; its first conditions enhanced; new powers, new energies, new life, new joys! and oh, with it all, such ge-

nerous, generous feelings! such a warm swell of gratitude! such a noble impulse to expend all these new powers in the production of good —to diffuse and expend the happiness enjoyed, till it should warm every living being in the creation of God! Such energy for duty! such power of endurance! such lofty disregard of self, even when existence was become so inestimably precious!

Oh, this is a glorious passage of a woman's life! the first rapture, the first pure ecstasy of love!

CHAPTER VI.

PHILIP did not leave town, as he had intended, to rejoin his mother. Under the influence of the feelings which now entirely possessed him, he felt it impossible to quit the spot where Hernana was. All his best feelings were aroused; his love seemed to bring with it something which aroused all that was excellent in his character.

He walked down the streets of G——, towards the large and lofty house which his father occupied, engaged in ruminations wholesome and good. He was contrasting his mother's view of life, with that presented by Hernana; her simple devotion to the useful and the

requisite, her unaffected obedience to the calls of affection and duty, with a life of devotion to art; and found in it a something wholesome and strengthening to the soul, in comparison with which the empty aims of the artist, be they the pursuit of the very highest forms of beauty, sank into insignificance.

What a vain, unsubstantial phantom, was this *beautiful*, when brought into comparison with the *good!*

In this his present mood, even the circumstances surrounding Hernana, which had been most unpleasing to his taste, assumed a different aspect. But, artist still in this, it was as if the charms of some lovely home scene, by Gainsborough or Collins, was contrasted with a Claude or a Poussin.

The very familiarity of the subject, the ease and tenderness of its daily aspect, gave an interest to the details never felt before.

That little kitchen! The old lady in the high-backed chair, the dosing tortoise-shell cat, the brightly blazing fire, the flashing light reflected from the shelves, with their copper pots and pans; the snow-white sanded floor,

the kettle humming its sleepy song, the fair, creature with her dark feeling eyes, and her sable braids of hair, kneading at the bread-tub.

An hour or so ago he had not known whether to be most pleased or offended at the sight; but he had gone an age in love since then. He was fairly launched in the enchanted land, where everything takes for its true form—the prevailing glory.

So Philip Gorhambury walked, and so he mused, as we might fancy Tennyson doing, before the composition of one of his lovely, poetic pictures of ordinary everyday life. And his thoughts began to take words, and then to arrange themselves into rhythm, and into regular verses; so that when he reached the Rectory, the first thing he did was to turn into the library, where pen and ink stood ever ready, and to sit down and pen—not the following lines, for I spare you them; though I almost wish I had them by heart, which I have not, to show you how charmingly, very ordinary scenes may present themselves to the truly poetic spirit. The lines might have been an

example and a warning; the very enthusiasm for the picturesque, displayed in them, might have led to some fear, how it actually was with the heart.

This, at least I fear, must be confessed, that Philip's dreams for the present, were of the present. The interest of the moment absorbed him. He looked not forward; and the sweet future of wife and home, so endearing when once entertained by man's imagination, if they presented themselves at all, loomed most indistinctly in the distance.

Hernana, on the other hand, like most other girls of her age, estimated the nature and strength of her lover's feelings, by the honesty and simplicity of her own. Women are so sincere in their attachments, when once attached—so truly devoted—their love is so completely their life, a thing to which every worldly, or interested consideration, is at once offered up without a thought—that they cannot understand how, too often, it is with men. How they can love and not love. Display, and that without insincerity, that which they at the moment honestly feel—namely, a vast deal of real attachment,

and yet leave undone that which is in their power at any moment to do—secure the object of their passion, and stamp the future happiness of life, by the irrevocable word which makes of two, one.

The dawdling, the uncertainty, the hesitations of men, are a source of great and unintelligible misery to the sincere hearts of women: they cannot resist the evidence of, and find it vain to attempt to disbelieve in, the existence of a passion which they every day expect will confirm its reality by words—words that never, never come! till hope and love languish and die—a long, dreary death of suffering.

Hernana sat by her father's bedside, watching him anxiously, but with a heart, so far as her own prospects were concerned, overflowing with happiness. She had believed, she had hoped in Philip's attachment before; but now she felt assured of it. He loved her! And if he loved her, what should prevent their being happy?

Lady Aylmer came the next morning, immediately upon hearing of Mr. Lovel's illness, to visit Hernana, and offer every assistance in her power.

She opened the door of the house, and entered the parlour. It was empty, so she made her way to the kitchen; and there they were. Hernana, as it would appear, had been making a little gruel for her father, and was preparing to pour it through a sieve and strain it into a small china basin. And who should be holding the sieve whilst she lifted up her saucepan with both hands? Who, but Philip Gorhambury!

Lady Aylmer started back with surprise. The kitchen-door stood open, so that her approach not having been perceived, the little scene was presented in all its simplicity.

She stood like one stupified with astonishment, and something of sadness and anxiety, expressed in her face. Philip was holding the sieve carefully in both hands, and he smiled upon Hernana with so much sweetness, as she lifted up the saucepan, and endeavoured to pour the gruel steadily in, and there was

such a pretty exchange of little laughs, and then such a look of tenderness upon his part, and such a sudden glow of rapture over her whole countenance!

Lady Aylmer sighed, and for a moment turned away her head. This was a very painful sight to her. Painful—most painful, that Hernana should love Philip! but far more painful that Philip should seem to love Hernana! For Lady Aylmer knew, or thought she knew, the world. Her prejudices against the whole family of the Gorhamburys were strong, and the suspicion and ill-opinion which attached to the father, she had extended to the wife and to the son. They were people she had never liked in her happier days. Their views of life, and ways of proceeding, were in contradiction to all her ideas. She thought them worldly, cold and calculating; and that the talents with which both mother and son unquestionably were endowed, only served to increase their faults.

It grieved her to think that such a heart as Hernana's—a heart so noble and so precious—should be bestowed, as many, many,

another heart she had seen bestowed, upon one quite incapable of estimating its value. If he loved her—which he must, or why was he here? —it would be through his fancy, rather than his heart, even granting that he had one.

After the exchange of a few more affectionate looks and pleasant words between them, Hernana took her basin and went up stairs; and then he laid down his sieve and sighed, as young men in love do, they don't know why, and he went and sat down upon the settle by the fire, and leaned his head upon his hand and sighed again—sighed like a furnace, if there were any good in that.

Lady Aylmer hesitated whether to advance or retreat. She did not and could not like Philip Gorhambury; but that seemed no reason for absolute avoidance, and it would look odd to go into the cold parlour without a fire, after a walk when a sharp easterly wind was blowing, merely to avoid meeting him. So Lady Aylmer entered the kitchen.

They knew each other by sight, though they had rarely spoken, and Lady Aylmer's story

was well known to Philip, as was the interest she had shown Hernana. We have found his mother, in her way, alluding to it.

He started from his reverie upon hearing a footstep: and perceiving who it was, rose hastily and came forward with a respect and politeness in his air, which was to her as unexpected as it was pleasing, offering her a seat by the fire, and saying something of the coldness of the wind.

She looked at him—hesitated for a moment whether to accept a civility from his father's son; but the courtesy of his manner prevailed, she could not resist it; so she took the seat by the fire he presented, and to her astonishment, found herself sitting there, with the son of Mr. Gorhambury by her side.

She looked at *his* son! the son of him, whom she still in secret believed had, in some mysterious manner, a concern in the loss of her own. The firm belief that her son still existed, and would sooner or later reappear, neither time nor reflection could impair; and she had an undefined sense, of injustice done, a feeling, almost

as if Mr. Gorhambury, by forcing himself into possession, had actually prevented that reappearance, on which her aching heart was ever dwelling, with a sort of restless, passionate, impatience.

Strange and bitter then, were those feelings with which she looked upon this fair and handsome young man, now occupying her son's place, and contrasted with agony, the fate of her own child, exposed to all the evil chances of degradation and obscurity. Her pale and beautiful countenance, assumed the dark expression of grief amounting to despair. She turned her head away and covered her face with her hand.

He was so beautiful! Such a fine young creature! So full of life and manliness! Such a picture of youth in its strength and glory! And such might her son have been—perhaps was!—perhaps was! but where? oh, where? And this one, was standing in his place.

Philip was shocked at her emotion, the cause of which he did not comprehend; he knew, however, that Lady Aylmer and his father were not upon speaking terms, and had usually heard

it attributed, to her evil temper and jealous pertinacity. Still the greatness of her fall, and the extent of her misfortunes, had excited in him many feelings of pity and interest; and the strange character of her beauty—ghostly beauty, as it might be called, for since that fatal period her cheek had never recovered the slightest colour—interested and touched him; so he endeavoured, by every means in his power, to overcome the disagreeable awkwardness of the situation, in which they both felt themselves.

He addressed the lady in the gentlest and most respectful manner, and though the question was merely as to whether she would let him disencumber her of her heavy cloak or not, the manner of it was almost irresistible.

Insensibly, Lady Aylmer felt her aversion subdued, by the charm of Philip Gorhambury's manner, and suffered herself to slide into conversation with him.

They talked of various things; of the news of the day; of art and literature; in all which matters, Philip showed himself a very competent and accomplished converser. He spoke of Mr.

Lovel with much feeling, but not one word about his daughter; an omission, which Lady Aylmer failed not to notice.

Presently Hernana appeared. She had been detained by her father's bedside, and came in apologizing for the delay. Lady Aylmer observed the heightened colour, the hesitating words, the anxious look upon both sides; and again she fixed her eyes enquiringly upon Philip.

There was not a doubt of the sincerity of his emotions, as betrayed by the sudden glow that spread over his countenance, as the fair girl entered; and the manner, half-confused, half-delighted, with which he performed some trifling service for her.

"How is your father, my dear? I am happy to hear he has had a better night," said Lady Aylmer.

"He is very much better, thank you, Madam. My mind is set at rest as regards present danger; but—"

"But what, my love?"

"There seems reason to fear"—and turning to Philip: "The physician you were so kind as to send this morning, appears to be of opinion,

that it will be a long time before my father will be able to resume his duties, and that change of scene and air, so soon as he can bear removal, will be absolutely necessary."

"Does he say so?" cried Philip, with a look of anxiety; "and where does he talk of sending you?"

"We are not got quite so far as that," she answered, with a faint smile. "There is no hope of my father quitting his bed, for some weeks."

"Will he see me?" asked Lady Aylmer; "and can I not be of use to you, my dear? My experience beside a sick bed has been long and painful. It has made me a good nurse. You must let me assist you, Hernana, in the care of your valued father — and my best friend," she added.

Hernana's answer was a look full of gratitude.

"And I!" cried Philip: "what can I do?"

The course of a love passage like this in which Hernana was engaged, would be tedious and uninteresting to follow. There were in it no events, except those minute ones, which lovers survey through magnifying glasses. No paroxysms of passion, no conversations full of interest and tenderness; for, to tell the truth, though everything between them proceeded as if they thoroughly understood each other—which for the time they did—no express declaration of his passion, had ever yet passed Philip Gorhambury's lips.

Everything, that love the most devoted could look, or do, was looked and done. Everything, save the one final irrevocable sentence. Everything, but the declaration in words that he loved her, and the demand in words, asking her for his wife.

She was satisfied without this. Indeed, she felt under the present circumstances, when it would have been impossible to appeal to her father, that there was delicacy and propriety in Philip Gorhambury's conduct; and his attachment was too unequivocally displayed, in every

manner by which attachment can be displayed, for her to feel any of those cruel alternations of hope and fear, by which many a girl's heart is worn out, and her health and spirits destroyed. She was as certain of her lover's truth and constancy, as of her own.

Lady Aylmer, who knew more of human nature, and was, as we know, not prejudiced in favour of the young lover, was not so well contented. She could not help wishing that something definite should pass. *She* could not help looking with doubt and distrust upon an attachment, where there were so many obstacles of pride and interest to overcome. Yet Philip Gorhambury put so little restraint upon his feelings, seemed so indifferent in displaying his devotion in her presence, that she felt it was almost injurious to doubt his sincerity. Doubt it, however, she could not help doing.

"Mr. Philip Gorhambury seems very assiduous in his attentions to your father," she said one day to Hernana. "I think it is very amiable of him. Few sons of rectors, think themselves under any obligation, to look after the comforts of their fathers' curates."

"Philip *is* very amiable—oh, so amiable!" sighed Hernana.

"A little too amiable for some of us, perhaps, Hernana."

"Perhaps so. I don't know—sometimes I think—"

"What do you sometimes think?"

"How dangerous it must be, in a world so changeful as this, to love any one too entirely."

"I quite agree with you, my love: we ought not. It is madness to build up idols in our hearts. So much may happen—such fearful changes and losses! But it is sometimes still more dangerous if we keep them."

"I don't quite understand, Madam."

They were sitting in the little kitchen, the fire blazing cheerily, darkness creeping on. It was black night behind the casement window; but the fitfully blazing fire kept up an ever changing and ever cheering light within. It was a moment of peace, such as opens the heart to confidence.

In such moments, Hernana's spirit would overflow with excessive happiness and joy:

soothed by the tranquil cheerfulness around, and, as it were, at leisure to enjoy the secret felicity she possessed.

"My love, there is no human being that it is safe to make an idol of."

"No, I suppose not; indeed, I believe it would be very wrong. It would be a form of idolatry, as you say; but I don't know what case that exactly applies to just now."

"Do you not? Nay, then—"

"If you mean," said Hernana, looking up, "that I make an idol of Philip Gorhambury, indeed you are mistaken. I have had an affection for him since he was a boy; I honour all his fine and noble qualities, but I make no idol of him, for idolatry is the worship of what is false, and I worship in him what is true."

"Heaven grant it prove so," Lady Aylmer ejaculated, but not aloud.

She was silent a little time; then she said:

"And how long do you mean to go on worshipping thus?"

"As long as I live, if he deserve it."

"And what is this worship to end in at last?"

Hernana coloured; but made no answer.

"Has *he* ever put that question to you?"

"He! how should he? Dear Lady Aylmer, I will not pretend to misunderstand what you mean; but how could he? How dare he, just now? My father so ill! Orphan of a mother!—quite alone but for you!"

"And am I not your mother?"

"Yes; more than mother; but not, not—just, perhaps, to him."

"And—forgive me if I am indiscreet, dear girl, but allow for a tender friend's anxiety—has he never said anything; remotely hinted at least—"

"Oh! hundreds and hundreds of times!"

"Unequivocally; so that there could be no mistake?"

"What can you mean, dear Lady Aylmer? If you mean to ask whether he has declared himself in express terms—no; he has not, he could not; but oh, if all the eloquence of

looks and broken words be anything, he has expressed his opinion in every possible way! I should be an unworthy, jealous creature to doubt him after what has passed."

Her faith was so serene and unhesitating; her confidence in his faith so complete; she looked so calmly, so confidingly happy, that Lady Aylmer could have hated herself for her own suspicions. She would have given anything to share in the young girl's assurance; but something within forbade it. She loved not these Gorhamburys. Why could not Philip speak out? Commit himself to *her* at least; do the generous thing—the truly, the only generous thing for man to do in such cases—commit himself, bind himself to the woman who loves him.

But this he never did. Time slipped on; and the tedious illness of Mr. Lovel at last terminated; but still nothing had been said that could irrevocably commit a man of honour—that is to say, in the common sense in which the word is usually applied to affairs of this description.

The illness of Mr. Lovel terminated, as the

physician had foretold, in a languishing state of weakness, for which change of scene and air were reckoned indispensably necessary. It was proposed that he should go to Penzance, accompanied by his daughter and Lady Aylmer, who felt as if life would be insupportable, if left to herself, and deprived of the constant comfort and interest of their society; she therefore prepared to accompany them, knowing, likewise, that her doing so would much diminish the expense which must, in any case, prove a heavy drain upon Mr. Lovel's purse.

The proposal was accepted with gratitude and delight, by both father and daughter, and preparations began to be made, for their speedily setting out upon their journey. They were to be absent six months: the whole, in fact, of the winter, the later autumn, and early spring months, it being thought desirable to keep Mr. Lovel in the warm temperature of Cornwall during that period.

And now Mr. Lovel was down stairs again, and in an arm-chair by the parlour fire; but he was wan and feeble, a quite changed man;

all his ancient spirit and energy gone, the mere shadow of his former self. The medical men, however, assured his anxious daughter, that this extreme feebleness was only the usual consequence of such an illness as his had been; and that she would find the effects of the contemplated change of air almost miraculous.

Ill, however, as he was, he was down stairs. She was again under his protection; he was enabled to see his more intimate friends, and Philip Gorhambury, of course. And now the time was come, when every objection to a full and unequivocal declaration of his feelings, was done away. Every day, Hernana believed that something definite would be said, for she could not think it possible that she should be suffered to depart for six months in a state of uncertainty, now beginning to become very painful.

Philip, on his side, seemed conscious, that since Mr. Lovel had come down stairs, his position, as regarded Hernana, was changed, and his manner altered with it. Expressions of devotion disappeared; he became absent, and thoughtful, often embarrassed and ill at ease; it



seemed as if every time he entered the house, he came with a resolution to say something, which yet never was said. And why?

CHAPTER VII.

Mrs. Gorhambury and her son sat together. They often sat so, talking confidentially, for they were very sincerely attached to each other—in their own peculiar way, be it understood, for their attachment was built up of a good deal of self-esteem, extended, as it were, to each other, as is often seen in characters of this egotistical sort. Such ones really can extend their self-love to their own near relations; this said self-love being often the strongest tie that exists between them.

Philip had instinctively kept the secret of his love for Hernana Lovel, as much as possible from his mother, and had to a considerable degree succeeded; but that lady was too clever

and sharp-sighted to be altogether blinded as to this matter; and though, not aware of the full extent to which Philip's affections were engaged, was upon the watch for every opportunity of meeting and warding off the danger that threatened him. To divert the course of his thoughts and affections, by unremitting endeavours, and yet by methods that would not excite his observation, or alarm his jealousy, was the plan she proposed to herself; and she carried on the hidden warfare against poor Hernana's happiness, and what would have ensured her son's best safety and happiness, too, with a cleverness and undeviating perseverance worthy of a better cause.

For though she chose to consider this affair with Mr. Lovel's daughter, as a most unfortunate and degrading *mésalliance*, there was nothing to justify the feeling. Mr. Lovel was a gentleman by birth and education; his daughter gifted with everything that could best adorn a woman, wanting alone, in those exterior accomplishments, which are only to be obtained by the efforts of extraordinary natural genius, or at considerable expense in money. Neither

could any portion be expected with the young lady, for money to advance there was none; it was not in the least needed; but such, too, is the way with many parents. Precisely because it was not needed; because Philip Gorhambury would have enough, and more than enough, for every rational purpose, Mrs. Gorhambury could not endure the idea, of his marrying a portionless girl.

The innumerable good qualities she possessed—her personal charms, her intellectual ability, her strong, yet amiable and most affectionate character—what were they in comparison with five or ten wretched thousands of pounds or so, when there was so large a fortune upon Philip's side? To marry a girl with nothing down, was to throw himself quite away!

"How absent you are, Philip, this morning," Mrs. Gorhambury began, as she sat before her easel, from which her eyes had been for some time diverted, employed in watching her son, who was sitting at a table, his pencil in his hand, with a sketch which he apparently intended to copy, stretched out before him. He seemed, however, not even to see it as he sat there, his

hand in act as it were to draw, but never moving, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, in a perfect reverie. Now and then a deep sigh might be heard, and his sighing would seem to arouse him, for he would hastily raise his hand, look at the model before him, draw a line or two, and then relapse into his former inactivity. "How absent you are, Philip! what weighty matter, may I take a mother's liberty to ask, can have occurred in your somewhat too prosaic life, to weigh, as it would seem, so heavily upon your spirits? You have been sitting before that table, three good quarters of an hour by Shrewsbury clock, and fetching sighs like a furnace, as Rosalind would say, but doing no earthly thing besides."

He started like one conscience-struck at his mother's voice, and looked hurriedly up at her as she spoke; then most involuntarily there came another sigh. He strove to hide it up with a short cough, but his mother was not to be so imposed upon.

"Another!" she said. "What on earth can you have to sigh for, child?"

"Sigh! I don't know that I sighed. Nothing

certainly, have I to sigh for." And he sighed again.

"Another, and another, and another!" said his mother. "My dear boy, don't hide the matter from me. I love you very, very much; more than even mothers in general love their sons, and it is the pride and joy of my life, to think that my society can form a portion of your happiness; but I am not so proud, or so vain-glorious as to fancy I can constitute it entirely. My dear Philip, I guess pretty well what is the matter with you, though you strive to conceal it."

He glanced quickly at her, with a conscious, anxious look. He knew well, as he thought, what must be coming; and what should he say?—how should he parry the attack? Or had he not better confess the truth at once, cast himself upon his mother's indulgence, and have done with it?

"I know well what is the matter with you—" she said.

He knew well, too.

"You are dying of *ennui*—"

He felt as one who has prepared himself to

mount a difficult step in the dark, and his foot falls upon plain ground. He was actually confounded by this sudden dispersion of his fears and difficulties.

"You are dying of *ennui*."

"No, mother, don't say so—don't think so."

"You are dying of *ennui*. All characters, of any mental superiority, are liable to be victimized, more or less, by that fiend, *ennui;* and the youthful, when of the gifted, most of all. *I* may be able to bear the monotony of this castle, which, romantic as it may appear, is, after all, a sort of prison to the mind. *I* am no longer young. I have my own occupations and interests, and can get along very tolerably. But *you*—what can *you* do? I have been reflecting upon this for some time. You are dying of *ennui*, I see; and no tyrant ever invented a more cruel *supplice*, as our neighbours would call it."

Certainly, it was not of *ennui* that he was dying, if dying he were; for his days and hours were full of interest—at times, of an almost devouring interest. He had of late become

more in love than ever: and so much in love, that he began seriously to feel that Hernana, come what would, must be his wife; and to be making up his mind to tell her so, in spite of the number of disagreeables, of all sorts and sizes, that he knew would be consequent upon the measure.

He had been very much harassed, as people of a character like his are prone to be, with fears for his own happiness, and with the struggles arising between apprehensions and wishes that would not be reconciled. His heart had been full of passion, and his head full of debate. Certainly, he had not known *ennui:* from that evil, at least, his perplexing fate had preserved him.

Just at this moment, he was vexed by hesitations as to whether he should deny the accusation at once, or let it pass: whether to seize upon this opportunity for a full explanation, which he dreaded as much as he desired, or defer it to another, as if there *could* be a better.

"It is generous in you," she said, "to look, as you are at this moment doing, as if you

would not own 'the soft impeachment;' generous to endeavour to conceal from your poor mother, that she cannot be all in all to your happiness. But it will not do. I know you, Philip, better than you, perhaps, know yourself; and at this moment, I am sure that you suffer from neither more nor less than *ennui*."

"No, mother, don't say so: pray don't repeat that. I assure you, *ennui* is the last feeling I have been suffering from these past two months. I *have* felt *ennui* often enough in my life, to know very well what it is; but I am not suffering from that cause now, I assure you."

"Perhaps you fancy so; but I tell you, *ennui* lies at the bottom of the mischief, depend upon it. What do you ride into G—— so often for, if it is not in search of excitement?"

He coloured a little, and said:

"I have not been seeking what is commonly called excitement."

"You don't think you have, perhaps; but I know you better; and I tell you, Philip—and trust me, who can read your heart as plainly as

the hand-writing upon the wall—*ennui*, and nothing more nor less than *ennui*, lies at the root of the matter; and it is that which drives you to seek excitement in any form or mode that can divert the demon, and afford a chance of feeling interested."

"Indeed, mother, you totally and altogether misapprehend the matter in this instance."

"So you think; and indeed if you did not, the very excitement which you find so agreeable would be at an end. If you were not hoodwinked and blinded by a strange sort of infatuation, you might ride to G—— seven mornings in the week, and you would not find yourself the better for it. Philip," she went on, assuming for the first time a more severe and earnest tone, "I must not have you throw away your life, like a young lieutenant in a marching regiment, for want of something better to do with your time and thoughts. My son, I have been to blame. Blinded by my fondness, by the fatal self-flattery of believing that my affection could suffice for your happiness, I have done very wrong. I have suffered you to stagnate here till the

slightest interest in the world was too grateful and too dangerous. I repeat it—I will not suffer you any longer, like a young lad in a marching regiment, to be sick to death of having nothing to do. I will not suffer you to fancy yourself in love—the word will out—because you have nothing better on earth to amuse your imagination with."

"Mother! what do you mean? I repeat it; you totally and entirely misapprehend the matter."

But she went on.

"Young men's first fancies, which they dignify to themselves with the sublime name of love, arise from various causes; sometimes it is the mere *besoin d'aimer*. Soft hearts, formed for the tender passion, easily find some girl or other, to be tender about, be it this or be it that, no matter. Others, whose minds and characters are of a different stamp, who require occupation because they have faculties to be occupied, fall in love because they have nothing else to do; deprived of the natural aliment required by their capacity, they want an object, and that is all. In this case the choice is

usually fixed upon the one least eligible or least attainable, because what they seek is struggle, difficulty, interest, object to be sought, and obstacles to be overcome; and woe, woe to them if they do overcome them; if, unhappily, insurmountable obstructions are not found to arrest them in their career! Woe, woe to them, when that which owed its chief, its almost entire attraction to difficulty, ceases to be difficult, and becomes their own! An imprudent, ill-assorted marriage, may have something in it wonderfully captivating to an imagination rendered morbid by idleness; but woe, woe, when the imagination has no longer anything to do with the matter, and a man finds himself set down for life with his *humble*, ill-chosen companion!"

"Mother, all you are saying may be very wise, may be very true, but I assure you it has nothing on earth to do in reference to me. I am not about to make an ill-assorted marriage, nor any marriage at all, that I know. I am greatly too young to sit down at present upon any terms. I must see more of life first."

"Unquestionably, undoubtedly. To own the truth to you, Philip, I did give you credit for more sense, more character, more manliness, than to fling away a life upon a fancy of the teens. Dear boy, it is time enough, as you say, to think of marriage ten years hence. You have the world to see, the world before you. You are not such a fool as to throw away the rich inheritance of an intellect such as yours, of a promise of life such as yours, upon one of those fond, dreamy fancies, which will possess lads of your age—there is no help for it—and which are only in danger of taking any form or consistency with a young man of sense, when he is so unfortunately left without sources of amusement and interest as you have lately been. I have been much to blame; you must forgive me for the sake of the cause, will you not, Philip? And now listen to me."

He felt at this moment as if all was as she described it. His love for Hernana set in contrast with the free, young man's life of excitement opening before him did appear as a fancy

and a charm, which no man of sense would suffer to prevail over his better self, and to which none but an imbecile would sacrifice a life. And yet even whilst his recreant heart was saying this, a small still voice whispered other things; and the creature he had loved from a child rose up before him.

"I listen, mother," he said; "but, indeed, you are alarming yourself most unnecessarily about nothing at all."

"I have no doubt my fears outran the occasion; but I assure you the advice I am going to give, and the plan I am about to propose, have only been a little hastened. My selfish wish to keep you near me but a little the sooner overcome, because you have lately taken a somewhat Corydon-like behaviour and expression. I don't believe my Philip is really in any very great danger from a tall brown girl in a kitchen; but it is as well not to entangle the brown girl herself by little acts of kindness and attention, which brown girls in kitchens are very apt to misunderstand, or pretend they misunderstand; and therefore, my dear, as in

the cases we have supposed, flight is the best security for all parties, I advise you to be wise in time, and order a pair of post-horses to your phaeton, and be off for Bath, which is now in the full tide of the season; and thence you can go to the continent, or anywhere else it may like you best—only don't let me see your face again for ten months at least. And I assure you, the Spartan mother, when she armed her son and sent him forth to battle without a tear, did not act much more heroically than I am doing at this moment, Philip."

And she looked at him with much and genuine emotion. She had very great influence with him, the more so that he was of so unstable a nature. People of a good deal of imagination without much strength of character are usually the victims of irresolution. They would and they would not; would have, without accepting the conditions annexed to the having; would refuse, without incurring the loss of happiness incident to refusal.

The manner in which this mother of his, whose intellect, taste, and knowledge of the

world, he so highly estimated—the way in which she spoke of his attachment, seemed at once greatly to disenchant the subject.

He began to wonder that he could have seriously entertained the idea of making Hernana Lovel, the daughter of a poor half-pay officer and curate, the brown girl busy in a kitchen, his wife. Regrets, tender remembrances, there might be—those gentle pullings at the heart with which a true love, like our good angel, seems to recall us to the sense of the pure and the truly wise and right; but he resisted them.

The evil influence—the world, the terrible world! with its dread laugh, its demands, its fancied obligations, spoke so loud, and spoke so emphatically when it borrowed his mother's voice!

He was silent; he seemed reflecting upon what she had urged. The woman that deliberates is lost—so is the man.

"Indeed, I am right," she went on, encouraged by the hesitation she read in his countenance. "I am sure the more you reflect upon the subject, the more you will find cause to

acknowledge the justice of what I say. Add to which there is this consideration: the plan I propose involves no consequences. Your absence for a short time from G—— will give you time to look about you, to think twice. And, oh, Philip! think twice, think a thousand times, before you throw your life away. Away, for what? an idle love dream, such as every young man of your age has dreamed in his turn, and every young man has, in his turn, awakened from."

"Mother! There is much truth in what you say, there is much in it to which I assent, much to which I absolutely refuse to assent. I should like, I think I ought to see *Hernana*—as the secret will out—I ought to see her again before I come to a conclusion."

"Exactly what I most particularly beg and desire that you will *not* do. Exactly what, if you are wise or know yourself, you will avoid doing. No; what I wish is, that you should try the strength of this attachment which you imagine you feel—try it fairly. If you see her under the influence of your present senti-

ments, you will only strengthen the illusion under which you lie. Besides, it is due to her, as well as to yourself, not to hold out delusive expectations. Your sudden departure will be a truthful, honourable proceeding. It will at once put an end to any—"

"Mother, if I have raised expectations, I ought to fulfil them."

"Idle nonsense! you can have raised no just expectations. What castles in the air a silly girl may build without any foundation, is nothing to you or to any one. The only point that concerns your honour is, *not* to give a foundation for such romances. You effectually avoid this by going away to Bath for a week or two, commissioning me to convey your adieus to the fair lady, a thing I will readily undertake to do; indeed, I ought to call and inquire after Mr. Lovel. Dear Philip be ruled by me. For my sake! for all our sakes! for the sake of the happiness of your whole future life! What I propose is wise, believe me, it is. And take it in the most unfavourable point of view; if it do no good, at least it can do no

harm. It is but going to Bath! What is the distance from Bath? You can return home in ten days or earlier, at any moment you wish it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Two days after this conversation a handsome chariot stopped at Mr. Lovel's door, and a finely-powdered footman inquired whether Miss Lovel was at home, giving the name of Mrs. Gorhambury.

Oh, how Hernana's heart began to flutter and beat! It was now an unusually long time since she had seen Philip—three days at least. She had become so accustomed to a visit from him every day, that it appeared to her an age. What could have kept him away so long? And now his mother was come in his place. Why did his mother come just now? she who so rarely—scarcely once in a year—

honoured the Curate with a call. Could she—could there be anything relating to Philip which brought her here in his place? The words, the hoped for long expected words, had often appeared to be just fluttering upon Philip's lips—they had not been said. Could he have employed his mother? Was she likely? Would *she* say them?

Hernana, be it observed, had no comprehension of the enormous breadth of the gulf which, in Mrs. Gorhambury's opinion, separated her from Philip. She *felt* rather, it may be said, than *knew* her own value. Though she could not touch the pianoforte like Henri Herz, or sing like Giulia Grisi, nor sketch like De Wint, nor speak six languages, she knew the value of a heart like hers; of such deep attachment, of such truth and sincerity, of a character so vigorous and so able. She felt instinctively the real value such things must prove to any one, most of all to a man like Philip.

Not in self-conceit, not making a false estimate of herself, was this done, for in fact she made no estimate at all; but she felt that

she suited him, and that she deserved him, and that the love they bore each other would secure the felicity of each. She felt that had their worldly positions been exchanged, she would have chosen Philip before all mankind. She believed that he felt the same strong and generous determination with regard to her. So she prepared herself to go down and meet Mrs. Gorhambury, with considerable emotion, no doubt, but without either trepidation or false shame; and as she turned the lock and entered the little parlour where Mrs. Gorhambury was sitting, the spirit and grace of her air and figure, her fine countenance, with the colour slightly raised, and her eyes so large, lustrous. and beautiful, moved that lady in a way she was not exactly prepared for.

Mrs. Gorhambury was too genuinely the artist not to be very much struck with beauty of form or expression whenever she might meet with it. She ceased at once to wonder at her son's taste, and rejoiced that she had that morning safely started him off for Bath.

Not that Hernana's figure was regularly

symmetrical, or delicately rounded as that of the heroine of such a romance ought to have been; for she was, perhaps, rather too tall, her limbs larger than a just proportion would have allowed, and her figure somewhat wanting in those softer curves of outline which belong to perfect female beauty; but it was the elasticity, the spirit, the life, which pervaded all, that something indescribable, which at once assures us that the possessor of such an exterior is one far above the common sort, something of the classical—of the heroic age. Mrs. Gorhambury could not settle with herself exactly how it was.

But she was wonderfully pleased, determined as she had been not to be pleased. She no longer marvelled, as I said, at Philip's infatuation; but this very admiration was inimical to poor Hernana's interests; the more Mrs. Gorhambury saw reason to dread the power of her attractions, the more she resolved to put a stop to the affair and prevent future intercourse.

Hernana came in, as I have said, looking as she was, a remarkably fine, striking girl, with her colour a little heightened, for her heart in truth was beating fast, yet no weak, nervous fear, no base self-desertion were sinking that heart, or those free and wholesome spirits. She knew Philip Gorhambury loved her; and she believed in his truth and fidelity, for she judged him by herself.

She felt certain that Mrs. Gorhambury's unexpected visit must have some reference to what deeply affected her. Not that she expected that Philip would have delegated to his mother the office of declaring his sentiments —an office he was so well fitted to discharge himself; but Mrs. Gorhambury so very rarely, or never, came to the house of her husband's Curate, that she could not help looking upon this unusual piece of condescension upon her part, an omen upon the right side, a sign that she was beginning to take interest in herself for the sake of her son. Therefore, it was with far more pleasure than she was accustomed

to feel when about to meet that lady, that Hernana had obeyed the summons to attend her down stairs.

Mrs. Gorhambury was seated in the little parlour upon the only large chair in the room, one devoted to Mr. Lovel's comfort, but which now stood empty by the window. This window looked out upon the little garden, which generally, through the care of Hernana, was neat and pretty, though she had far too much work upon her hands to be able to bestow much pains or time upon it, and her father had far too many uses for his money to allow of her employing the labour of others upon this innocent piece of luxury. I wish I could say that it ever looked so pretty and so trim as it would have done if Hernana had found little else to do but look after it. A garden, such as one sees sometimes, and reads of very often, it never was; and now, long neglected during Mr. Lovel's tedious illness, it was become a perfect wilderness, and anything but a pleasing wilderness.

For it was that time of the year when autumn is in the sere and yellow leaf, or rather in the black and sodden stem; and broken sunflower stalks, and miserable, half-dying chrysantheums, were to be seen, with Chinese roses putting out a few pinkish, deplorable, sickly flowers among their straggling branches. The little grass-plot was all rough with untrimmed grass, and half covered with decaying leaves. Such was the cottage garden upon which the eyes of Mrs. Gorhambury, the poet, the artist, and the fine lady in one, were bent with an expression of disgust, somewhat more than the occasion required.

For, after all, it was but a bit of garden-ground that was rough. All within the house was clean to precision, and looked neat, in spite of the homeliness of the furniture. So, at this time of the year, and occupied in pious cares as she had been, methinks Hernana might have escaped contempt and censure for her neglected garden.

But Mrs. Gorhambury was in a humour to

see everything in the worst light; and the dreary spectacle of vegetable disorder before her eyes she chose to accept as an indication of that want of delicacy in habits and taste within, which she allowed to herself as a just reason for dreading this *mésalliance* for her son; choosing to forget the inveterate and unfeeling pride which lay concealed under all these petty pretences.

The state of the garden might be disgusting; but the mien and carriage of the young girl as she entered the room, gave rise to other sensations. There was the undefined air of superiority belonging to a free and generous spirit about her, which filled Mrs. Gorhambury, as I have said, with sentiments partly of admiration, and partly of apprehension, which she found very particularly disagreeable.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting, Madam," began Hernana, as she entered the room; "I beg your pardon for the delay. My father was just being put into his bed again, and I could not leave him till it was done."

"How is Mr. Lovel? I hope better. I called to inquire after him, to satisfy my own anxiety upon the subject, and report to Mr. Gorhambury. I hope you can give me a more favourable account."

"Not much more favourable," said Hernana, sadly. "My father is still very, very ill. Something there is about him which yields to no medicines prescribed; a languor and weakness it is impossible to conquer. He is very much grieved for the inconvenience to which he fears he must be putting Mr. Gorhambury; but how can he help it? And, then, this dreadful fever was caught in the discharge of his duty."

"I have heard so. I think it is a pity to run such risks, and for purposes of, I fear, very doubtful utility; for, after all, what can be done? The apothecary, and a good bottle of wine or two, I presume is the principal thing."

"Oh, Madam!—" then she stopped herself. She felt as if there would be a certain air of [illegible] in saying more upon

this subject to one so much older, and who should have been so much better taught than herself; she marvelled, and was silent.

Mrs. Gorhambury seemed to read her thoughts.

"Do not misunderstand me," she went on; "I know all you would say;" and then she muttered something about death-bed repentance and enthusiasm.

"My father thinks," began Hernana, and then she stopped again.

"Oh! you need not tell me what Mr. Lovel thinks upon these subjects," Mrs. Gorhambury continued, with the slightest possible acerbity in her tone; "we all know his high notions of duty, and his peculiar opinions upon certain subjects. I only wish the consequences had not stretched him upon a sick bed, and laid him up useless for months."

The heart of Hernana began to beat faster. It was a rebel heart, and it would beat high when indignant. The colour flew to her usually [redacted] face; but she said nothing.

She turned a little away, that was the only external sign of anger, or disgust, which she gave.

Mrs. Gorhambury either did not, or was too proud to show, that she perceived or cared for the little demonstration. She dropped the subject, and went on with a manner altogether unconcerned.

"What are your plans? What are you about to do? What does Mr. Fenmore advise?"

"The doctor says, Madam, that change of air is absolutely necessary; and we are thinking of trying what a journey of a few weeks will do. By my father's desire, I wrote to Mr. Gorhambury upon the subject this morning."

"A journey! This is a strange resolution enough; and odd, that Mr. Gorhambury was not informed of it before. *His* convenience seems not very particularly attended to in this."

"Dear Madam, what can we do? My poor father is too helpless to be of the slightest use

to Mr. Gorhambury; yet he was most anxious to stay upon the spot, in hopes of being soon able to resume his duties. It was not till this morning that Mr. Fenmore mentioned the subject, and proposed the plan with so much urgency, that at last I persuaded my father to allow me to write to Mr. Gorhambury."

"Mr. Fenmore! This morning!" Mrs. Gorhambury mused for awhile. "This morning, don't you say? And where, if I may take the liberty of asking, is it your intention to go?"

"That point is not settled yet. It must depend upon my father's strength. And to own the truth," she added, colouring a little, "upon the strength of his purse."

"Are you to go to the sea coast?"

"No, I believe not. Mr. Fenmore recommends a change to some inland place, where my father will enjoy change of air, and have the advantage at the same time of good medical attendance, which he is not, indeed, at present, in a fit state to do without."

"Perhaps Bath would suit you. Perhaps, Bath is the place you are going to," said Mrs. Gorhambury, speaking with a certain hesitation and difficulty.

"No, I believe not. Rather, perhaps, Clifton, or the Hot Wells; or, if we can manage it—"

"Clifton! the Hot Wells. They are very near Bath," said Mrs. Gorhambury.

"I believe so."

"I presume Miss Lovel *knows* that."

"I might have said so. But the place Mr. Fenmore particularly recommended is Launceston, or Penzance, in Cornwall; though the last I believe *is* near the sea."

"But you prefer Clifton or the Hot Wells, because they are near Bath, eh, Miss Lovel?"

"I know nothing of Bath. My only reason for preferring Clifton is that it is nearer, and the journey will be less expensive. I know nothing of Bath. We have no reason for wishing to be near Bath."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Gorhambury, drily, "I thought *you* might prefer it, as it is just the high season for Bath. But I forgot—you profess to despise the world, and are indifferent to its times and seasons."

"I cannot profess to despise that which I never knew; and probably—" but she altered the word to "perhaps," for she was truth itself—"and perhaps never shall know."

Mrs. Gorhambury marked the change, and it irritated and provoked her very much. She felt quite angry; so she repeated the word.

"Perhaps! Oh then, Miss Lovel *has* some expectation of being introduced into the great world some time or other."

"No one knows what may happen to them," answered Hernana.

"True; no one knows. But most of us may form a pretty shrewd guess. Well, I keep very much aloof from it myself; but I do not pretend to share your indifference upon the subject just at this moment. I hear Bath is

unusually gay and pleasant, and I heartily wish it may be so, for Philip started for the place yesterday in high spirits, and full of anticipations of enjoyment. It is his first season, though I prophecy it will not be his last. I heartily hope his expectations of pleasure will not be disappointed. All the world of beauty and fashion is there, as the vulgar newspapers have it, and—

"My dear Miss Lovel, what's the matter with you? You look suddenly taken ill; quite pale—over-fatigue. Pray, try my smelling-bottle."

"No, thank you, Ma'am," putting it coldly aside with her hand. "I am not very strong just now; but the fresh air is the best thing. I will take a turn upon the grass-plot, if you will give me leave, and return again."

Yes; it should be the grass-plot — the grass-plot in front of the parlour windows. Mrs. Gorhambury should not think that she was gone away to cry about it.

Fresh air would enable her to hold up till

this cruel, cruel woman was gone: that was all she just then wanted.

"Go, my dear, by all means," said Mrs. Gorhambury, in a milder tone; for she could not help being a little touched by the dismay written in the fallen countenance.

If Hernana had not been endowed with a courage and fortitude far beyond the common, she never could have stood the shock as she did. She must have given way to a burst of tears, or fallen flat upon the ground; but shed a tear she would not, and faint she did not, though the room was swimming round her; shrill noises were in her ears, and she scarcely knew where she was.

She managed, however, to escape into the garden; took two or three turns upon the little grass-plot, just in front of the windows, Mrs. Gorhambury still sitting there, and, as she knew, watching her; and then, having collected her scared and distracted spirits, and composed herself as well as she could, she re-entered the room.

And Mrs. Gorhambury, pitiless as ever, (for these unequivocal signs of emotion betrayed, as she thought, the secret understanding between the two), went on as if finishing her sentence:

"And so I supposed you too might be going to Bath, or into the neighbourhood of Bath?"

"No, Madam; certainly not. Mr. Fenmore wishes us to go to Launceston, as I believe I had the honour of telling you."

"He is quite right: I am glad to hear you have come to that determination," said Mrs. Gorhambury, greatly relieved. "Mr. Fenmore is unquestionably right. The air of Bath, even of Clifton and the Hot Wells, has something bleak in it, after all. Launceston, on the other hand, is the Madeira of England, I have been told; I never was there. Besides, you will find it very cheap; and the difference of prices will more than compensate for the difference in the length of the journey. But I am afraid you still hanker after Bath."

"What should make you think so, Mrs. Gorhambury? No, there is no hankering, indeed: Bath is the last place upon earth that I should wish to go to."

"Keep to that resolution, for it is the wisest you can make, in every point of view," said Mrs. Gorhambury, with some emphasis, as she rose to go; for Hernana's colour changed so alarmingly, she was in terror lest there should be a scene; and as the traveller, descrying the signals of approaching storm, hurries to shelter, Mrs. Gorhambury hastened to take refuge in her carriage. "I must be be gone. Don't ring the bell. Pray, don't trouble yourself: I can open the door myself. I shall be glad to hear of your safe arrival at Launceston. And can we be of any use? There is our cart; it is doing nothing at the Rectory. It can take your baggage to the coach. Anything else?"

But Hernana spoke not. She could not force her voice to utter a syllable of thanks. She would not stretch forth her hand to take

the offered one of Mrs. Gorhambury, who, triumphing in her success, extended it with every appearance of cordiality and good-humour.

This cordiality and good-humour made Hernana feel more heart-sick than all the rest. The anger she could stand; the good-humour made her feel almost hatred.

Gone to Bath! Well, and why should he not go to Bath? Was there anything so unreasonable in his wishing to go to Bath? anything so unheard of, in a young man taking such a measure, that it should produce all the effect it did upon Hernana?

Philip was gone to Bath to be very gay there, that was all she had heard; and Philip had taken his departure without coming to take leave. Perhaps this was unavoidable. She felt, she knew that it was not unavoidable. Perhaps he would write to her, to inquire after her father, to explain why he went away thus suddenly.

No! She knew that he would *not* write. It was all over between them. The world had seized its victim. Philip would be but a too easy one. She was not altogether deceived as to Philip's character, much as she loved and admired him. She felt that he was not made of that stuff of which the great, the heroic are made; and she felt that to adhere to his preference for her would, under the circumstances, savour of the great and the heroic.

She cast one despairing glance around her. It was all darkness. It was as if every light of her life had gone out at once.

Philip had been the loadstar of her existence ever since she remembered her existence; the object to which, as by a natural magnetic influence, she tended. Whilst he had been there, all things else had been in comparison indifferent, as regarded joy or sorrow, with only the exception of her father and Lady Aylmer; and even those too, dear as they were! oh, how different it was! Philip had been the secret source of joys so ineffable, consolations and

supports so precious, so strong, so inexhaustible! His affection first, and then his love, had so entirely constituted the existence within, that now all was suddenly swept away, she felt as if chaos were, indeed, come again.

CHAPTER IX.

THEN Mrs. Gorhambury went next to visit another young lady.

Yes, there was another young lady just arrived at G——; and before Mrs. Gorhambury left town, most certainly she must go and pay her a visit.

This young lady is the daughter of the Lady Maria Westmore, and of the Dean Westmore, of G——, to whom I slightly introduced you at the beginning of this history.

Maria, for she is called after her mother, has just completed her education at a highly fashionable boarding-school; and has returned home to be introduced into the world, and, in

due time, married, and all that; and she seems set apart as one of fortune's favourites, to accumulate around herself all the good things of this life, and make a very slender experience of its anxieties and sorrows.

She is excessively pretty, extremely sweet-tempered, and kind-hearted enough; very elegant in her dress and habits, moderately well educated in more important respects; highly talented, she is called, which means in this case that she possesses a remarkable talent for music; but more than all this, she is daughter to Lady Maria, and the Dean of G——, consequently a person of the first importance in her own little circle.

Mrs. Gorhambury has had her eye upon this young lady for her son Philip ever since she was born. Mr. Gorhambury, in his arbitrary way of arranging things, has, because he wishes and chooses it, looked upon the matter as of course settled. The Dean and Lady Maria have in some way or other accustomed themselves to think it is to be, without taking any particular pains to bring it about; for the Dean is a man of too much sense, and we may add

of a matrimonial nature; and Lady Maria is too much accustomed to let things take their course to adopt very energetic measures to secure any plan.

All that has been done, therefore, upon their side has been to suffer the two young people to pass a good deal of their time together. Little aware were they of what they were doing, or that while, Philip Gorhambury was nourishing a romantic passion for the Curate's daughter, the Dean's daughter was giving all her girl's heart, such as it was, to him.

A dangerous youth this Philip Gorhambury, it would seem, since two girls so extremely unlike, as were Hernana and Maria, should alike be bewitched by him.

Maria's love had, however, as yet been a hidden thing—hidden at least from every one but her bosom friend at school, a certain Miss Harriet Manvers, to whose sympathising bosom she had confided her passion, and from whom she had received all the encouragement which loftiness of feeling to condescend to any schemes

one romantic young lady is accustomed to bestow upon the love-tale of another.

In this instance, however, the fair heroine's attachment was not productive of any dire wretchedness, for there was a sort of atmosphere of encouragement around her. Philip Gorhambury was flattering and attentive, smiled very sweetly, and rattled away very gaily when in her presence. He had the run of the Deanery, and was a welcome guest whenever he made his appearance, which the close intimacy of the families rendered a very constant occurrence; this being, however, too habitually his custom from childhood to be significant of any peculiar feeling or remark.

But Maria was far too young and inexperienced to think of distinctions of this nature, and quite inclined to put the interpretation of her friend, Miss Harriet Manvers, upon Philip's visits. Though, certainly, to one more acquainted with the symptoms of such things, the easy manner in which Philip treated Maria, which had every appearance of being merely

that of a young man's good-natured indulgence to a pretty school-girl, would have given no encouragement to more serious hopes or expectations.

But be that as it might, with the other members of the family, Maria found herself an object of the greatest partiality and indulgence, and for Philip's sake she loved Mrs. Gorhambury very much, and even found it possible to love harsh, unamiable Mr. Gorhambury himself, after a manner. So she was delighted when she heard Mrs. Gorhambury's name announced, as the footman opened the door of the drawing-room in which she was sitting with her mother.

Maria had been absent for about eighteen months, during which none of the Gorhamburys had seen her. These months had been the finishing months. She went away a thin, lanky girl, in a white frock and a long sash, looking gawky and unformed, as girls at that age are apt to do; she had returned, a young lady complete, in a dress of the first fashion,

admirably adapted to display the beauty of her form and figure, both of which had in the course of that time ripened into something very pretty indeed.

Mrs. Gorhambury called to pay her first visit to the young lady as young lady. I ought to have added, that after the finishing year at school, Maria had spent six months, accompanied by her mother, partly in London, partly in visiting among her mother's relations. She had been presented, and so forth, and was now come back, still quite as much in love with Philip Gorhambury as ever. For, after all, though she had been a good deal out, she had not mingled much with the gay world. The people she belonged to, being rather a formal, old-fashioned set, she had not been thrown into the society of young people of her own age; so, even if her little heart had been inclined to inconstancy, there had been small opportunity for it.

She was delighted, therefore, to hear Mrs. Gorhambury announced, and rose up with a

face animated with pleasure as that lady entered the room, and who having made her compliments to Lady Maria, turned towards the daughter, holding out both her hands. She started back as she did so with a little cry of pleased surprise; then advancing, took her by the hand, and drawing her forwards, gazed at her for a moment or two with a look of the most gratified affection, and then saluting her upon each cheek, said:

"My dear, you must allow an old friend—I have known you from your long frocks, you know. How you are grown; and how well you look!" And she turned to Lady Maria with a sort of appeal, as if to say, is she not charming?

Lady Maria thought so, but was of so inveterately quiet and impassible a nature, that not even the admiration excited by her own daughter could move her much. She responded by a calm, self-satisfied smile, to Mrs. Gorhambury's animated glance.

"What a cotton-wool doll it is," thought that lady; "but the girl is charming." And then she secretly congratulated herself upon

her morning's work; rejoicing that Philip was off for Bath, and that Hernana was on the move for Cornwall, or the Madeiras, if possible. Yes, it should be to the Madeiras, if possible. The absurd affair—if it could even be called an affair—was ended, and Philip would return to see Maria in all her beauty, his fancy no longer disturbed, as she hoped, by another image.

"How she is grown and altered!" repeated Mrs. Gorhambury, sitting down by Lady Maria, her eyes still fixed in delighted admiration upon Miss Westmore. "She is perfectly charming!" she whispered. "I always thought she promised to be very pretty, but anything so perfectly lovely as this, I never anticipated."

"Do you think so?" lifting her glass and looking at her daughter. "Yes, I believe she is thought pretty well by some people."

"And my dear," turning to Miss Westmore, "I hope your fine musical talent has not been neglected. I trust your pianoforte has not been forgotten in the midst of the gaieties of

the great world you have been living in."

"Oh, as for that, I don't think we have been anything very particularly gay — have we, Maria? I think our set is dull enough— don't you, child? I declare I think the world's gone stupid since I was young. Yes, I believe the passion for your pianoforte was kept alive. I used to hear you practising it most assiduously at Lord Carlton's, at least; but then it was horribly stupid there, and the poor thing had literally nothing else to do."

"It was not particularly entertaining, certainly," said Maria; "but indeed, Mrs. Gorhambury, I should not have forgotten my darling piano wherever I had been. I love music more passionately than ever."

This was said quite naturally. Maria's taste for music was genuine. She inherited it from her father the Dean. She had been cradled in music. She played charmingly: really charmingly. Not as mere good masters teach a clever girl to play, but with a fine natural talent, carefully developed by the best instruction.

"I thought," said Mrs. Gorhambury, "that Miss Westmore had too much genius ever to prove inconstant to her pianoforte. Great talent and great delight in an occupation are usually found united."

"I do love my pianoforte, dearly," said Maria, "and I have often thought, how charming it would be, if dear Mrs. Gorhambury would let me accompany her delightful harp, sometimes. I have brought down some capital duetts of Stoddart's, for harp and pianoforte."

"I know them, I think," cried Mrs. Gorhambury, eagerly. "Is there not one begins la, la, la," singing a stave or two. "Mills sent them down a few weeks back. They are very good. There is an accompaniment for a violoncello obligato, to one or two of them."

Maria coloured a little — a pretty, sweet colour it was, and said "yes, she believed so."

"Then we shall make quite a concert when my son comes back. Philip is gone to Bath, Lady Maria."

"What do you let him go to Bath

for? There is nobody worth knowing at Bath."

Mrs. Gorhambury was a little set down by this speech, but she rallied with an:

"Oh, it is only *pour se désennuyer*. We were so dreadfully dull at Castle Avon. Mr. Gorhambury, I think, grows more sulky every day, and his dislike for company increases. Poor Philip! It really is hard upon a young man, and he hates field sports, you know. I thought he would be moped to death, so I advised him to take a run to Bath. It used to be gay enough at this time of the year in my time."

"I'm sure it's not gay now, at this time or any time. But, true, as you say, one does not know where to go, for Cheltenham is so Irish, and Leamington so common-place; and, as for the things in Derbyshire, they're horrid. Why don't you send him to Paris?"

"I am a foolish mother. We have been so happy, so much accustomed to enjoy things with each other, that now the continent is at last opened again; I own I wished to travel with him, and that we should visit Paris and Italy for the first time together."

"Well, Mr. Philip Gorhambury is a most exemplary young man, I do not doubt. I suppose you think you shall keep him *good* by going with him to Paris. Many mothers, I have known, lying under that blessed delusion."

She spoke with the contempt with which a mere passionless woman of conventionalities and the world, regards anything that deviates in the slightest degree from that world's beaten track, quite incapable of either sympathizing with, or even imagining the existence of, feelings strong enough to occasion such a course. She, I believe, thought Mrs. Gorhambury a somewhat out of the way and very affected woman, because she had great talents, strong feelings, and led a life somewhat different from other people.

More especially the affection which was professed between the mother and son appeared to her exaggerated and preposterous; and the idea of such a thing as their really planning to travel together, seemed to her the very climax of absurdity.

Not so to Maria. She thought it charming

of Mrs. Gorhambury to be so fond of her son; and thrice charming of Philip to love to travel with his mother. She only wished with all her heart that she might but be of the party.

"Dear mamma," she said, "how natural it seems that Mrs. Gorhambury and Mr. Philip Gorhambury, who have both such a passion for pictures, should love to visit the Louvre together."

"Dear me, yes. I suppose it may be; but it strikes me as rather original. And, so Mr. Philip Gorhambury is really gone to Bath; and who, for goodness sake—do tell me—who on earth can be there?"

"There are the L.'s, I know; and Sir C. C's. family, and the F's." mentioning a few names; and whilst she did so Maria's heart began to beat a little faster. She knew none of these families, but she fancied half a dozen nice girls belonging to each of them.

"The L.'s and the F.'s! Yes, tolerable people. Well, I hope he will amuse himself very much. And, pray, when do you expect him back again?"

"In a fortnight, or ten days, at the farthest. And then, Miss Westmore, we will try the trios,

shall we? Philip is excessively improved upon his violoncello; he really plays charmingly."

"How's Mr. Lovel?" interrupted Lady Maria. "The Dean wrote me he had been very ill whilst we were away. I hope he's better. He'd be a great loss; he's such a useful man, I've heard the Dean say."

"And dear Hernana, how is she?" put in Maria. "Mamma, it rained so yesterday, you would not let me go out; but I must put on my bonnet and just run down to her."

"You can't go to-day, child; for one of the carriage-horses is lame. As for your running, like a madcap, through those dirty streets towards the wharfs, I do not intend to allow of its ever being done. You forget you are no longer a child."

"Mr. Lovel is better," said Mrs. Gorhambury, "but still unable to resume his duty. They talk of sending him to a milder climate—Cornwall, or, perhaps, the Madeiras. I saw Hernana a quarter of an hour ago. She was full of the scheme."

"What a fine girl that daughter of Mr. Lovel's is!" said Lady Maria. "She reminds

me of Lady E. E. Such a gipsy of a creature! I really am half afraid of her, girl as she is; she has so much dignity about her.

"She is a dear, dear girl," added Maria; "and I love her almost better than any one in the world, except darling Harriet, who is married, and gone nobody knows where. Mamma, you really must let me go to her, or let me send and ask her to come to me. As for the carriage-horse, its leg will never be mended: our carriage-horses' legs never are. So I will have a fly, and a footman; that will be the best way; for I would rather go to her, than send to ask her here now her father's so poorly. And besides, I do so love that Parsonage, and the wee parlour, and the kitchen."

"That I can quite understand," said her mother. "There is nothing I love so much, or think so pretty, as a kitchen in a cottage. Well, child, I have no objection. I think Hernana Lovel a very good friend for you," added Lady Maria, who, when she chose to

make use of her understanding, possessed a tolerable one; "better a thousand times than that odious Harriet Manvers, who was the most vulgar school-girl I ever met with—quite enough to make one ill."

CHAPTER X.

"You are come back, dear Maria. How dear of you to come to me so soon! so glad, so thrice glad as I am to see you!" cried Hernana, embracing her friend, whose young and lovely face and figure, set off by the elegance of her dress, seemed quite to brghten the lowly little kitchen, into which she had forced herself, delighted to find Hernana there in the midst of her household gods.

"Dear me! I am so glad to come—so glad to be here! Oh! I have seen nothing I liked so well, nothing I thought so pretty, nothing to

me so delightful, since I went away, as you, in your kitchen, Hernana."

"What a remarkable thing you are!" giving her a little tap upon the cheek. "What, after all the fine people you have been among, and the fine sights you have seen!"

"I declare to you," said Maria, sitting down, "it is just as I say. I don't know what there is in me, but you cannot think what a bore I find things that everybody seems to like so much, and make such a fuss about. I find what they call society so tiresome; but I believe, as ill-luck would have it, I belong to a very tiresome set of people. I had ten thousand times rather lead the life you lead, Hernana, so that I might but have my pianoforte. I must have my pianoforte, you know."

"As great a rage for that as ever?"

"Oh, greater and greater than ever; and I really play so well, it's quite the astonishment of everybody; and of course that adds to the pleasure. It's no vanity in me to say so, but I really do play very well indeed; and I wish you would

come to the Deanery, and hear me; but you do not care for pianofortes?"

"Not very much. I love music too, I believe; and I like to hear you, because I love you."

"That's very kind of you to say, Hernana; but what's the matter with you?" said Maria, looking into her friend's face, which, indeed, was paler than usual, and her eyes were heavy, and with a clouded expression, affording a strong contrast to the usual bright serenity of those twin stars. "Mrs. Gorhambury, who was with us yesterday, told me Mr. Lovel had been ill, and that you were very anxious about him, that he did not recover kindly, and that you were going to try change of air. I am sure if *he* wants change of air, you look as if *you* wanted it quite as much; you are quite an altered creature since I went away."

"You have been eighteen months away. Eighteen months is a great space in life! We all change in that time!" said Hernana, willing to put the matter aside. Alas! she knew it

was within the last eight-and-forty hours, for that was the time which had elapsed since Mrs. Gorhambury's visit, that the change had come over her.

She did, indeed, look ill. What she had suffered in that time exceeds description: though she had from the first moment that she heard of Philip's departure in this unkind manner—without a line, without a call, without a word, after all that she could not but be conscious had passed—felt a kind of instinctive certainty that everything was over between them. Dimly the future shadowed itself forth to her mind; how it would *be*, she felt it had not been given her to discern. This feeling alone pressed upon her with that dire conviction not to be shaken off; that melancholy divination of the heart to which, struggle against as we will, we seem impelled by a power too strong for us. In vain, as the first panic subsided, and she had leisure to reflect, did she argue the matter with herself, striving to reason herself into a hope, which the something within her obstinately re-

fused to accept. It would not do; her heart seemed to have died within her, all the spirit, relish, light of life to be gone.

Heavy and drooping she went about her usual duties; but all the alacrity with which she was accustomed so cheerfully to fulfil them had forsaken her. In vain she tried to rally—to be what, till that day, she had ever been; in vain!

A blight had gone over her: it seemed as if the death-breathing wind of the desert had passed, and all that was beautiful and glad had withered away.

She had loved Philip so long—so long! that it seemed as if she had loved him before she could remember. Her father and Philip—that had been the whole of her existence. Her father had her affection, her interest, her love, her duty; but Philip was the soul of her life, her light, and her joy!

And how exceedingly happy had been these last four weeks; these four weeks of toil and anxiety, sweetened by his visits, by his kind-

ness, his tenderness, and rendered—oh, too rapturous! too exquisite! as certain looks, certain words, certain gestures, so precious, so expressive, would escape from him at times; only the more significant, only the more apparently sincere, because they were evidently involuntary.

Such a forty-eight hours as she had gone through since Mrs. Gorhambury's visit! Oh, there are dreadful passages in human life—passages which are endured in the hidden silence of the inner being, unregarded, unrevealed, unmarked by the nearest and dearest, known only to Him who reads the heart, and sends His chastisement of sorrow to His children!

A gleam of joy had gladdened the darkness of her spirit as Maria entered. Kindness is always healing. She had loved the Dean's daughter much; more than, as she had often told herself, was prudent, for she was well aware of the social distance which separated them, and she doubted Maria's constancy. To

find her the same—so ready to seek her out—so loving and affectionate, had warmed and cheered her. There was quite a glow of the heart. For a few moments other things were forgotten, and Hernana was herself again. But that soon passed away, and the heaviness of sadness came over her, giving that extraordinary expression of suffering to her face which had surprised Maria so much. Maria was extremely good-natured but not very discerning, and the depression of Hernana's manner must have been great to have excited her attention.

"Change in eighteen months!" was her reply to Hernana's remark; "yes to be sure we do, but not as you are changed; but I know what it is," she went on, for her poor little foolish heart was full of one subject almost to the exclusion of every other. "I do believe you are in love! Nay, I vow you are colouring scarlet! This *is* charming! I thought you never would be so—what shall I call it?—as to fall in love. Oh! it is delightful. Now we

can have confidences and talk of our lovers together—which, you were so wise, I never dared do before, Hernana. I was forced to take refuge with Harriet Manvers, who was never fit to hold the candle to you; and now she has disgusted me outright, for, after pretending to me to be dying for Lieutenant Oswald, of the 5th, who, though he had not a penny, she vowed she was ready to scrub the floor for—what has she done! but, in less than two months' time, thrown the poor man overboard, and married a good-for-nothing old squire, thirty years older than herself, because he has thirty thousand a-year. Isn't it *too* bad?"

Hernana smiled. "I always thought Miss Manvers a little too much a votary of the great world to suit you, Miss Westmore."

"Don't Miss Westmore me; but come and sit down here on the window-seat. How nice it is! with the window open and the robins chirping this morning; and now, first tell me a little about yourself and your affairs, and then I will tell you about mine."

"Dear Maria, how you run on! I have nothing to tell you, believe me; but I shall be happy to hear what you have to tell me."

"Ah, you are so close and reserved. That's a great fault in you, Hernana, let me tell you, for I am as positive as I sit here that you are in love. It is impossible to look in your face and doubt for a moment what's the matter with you—I know it," she went on, "but too well by myself. Oh, Hernana, to think of Philip Gorhambury!"

Hernana gave a sudden start.

"What's the matter?" cried Maria.

No; the idea had never presented itself before. It may seem strange, but she had not seen them much together. The first pang of jealousy, added to that of desertion, is dreadful.

"Nothing! nothing! You were saying something about Mr. Philip Gorhambury, I think."

"You think! Why, to be sure I was. You

think! Well, you are a strange creature," said Maria, somewhat pettishly. "Did you never find me out? Harriet Manvers found me out in a moment."

"Perhaps so. I am not clever in finding people out. So, Mr. Philip Gorhambury, perhaps it is, that—"

"Dear me!" cried Maria, throwing herself back in her chair with a sort of childish glee. "So you really never detected me before! How odd you are, Hernana. Oh me! I have been dying for Philip Gorhambury since I can't tell when."

It looked so like impiety, so like sacrilege, so like blasphemy, to speak thus of feelings so sacred; and of him! Hernana dropped the hand she held with a mingled sensation of disgust and contempt; then, forgive her for it, her heart was a little cheered. It was impossible, she felt sure that a man like Philip Gorhambury, having once loved herself, could desert her for a trifler like this. Oh no! He was gone. He had done that

which she felt he must intend her to understand as a rupture of the tie between them. He had been cruel, not to say treacherous; but he would not abandon her for this one! The same instinctive assurance which had driven her well nigh to despair by the certainty that he was parted from her for ever, now told her that he was gone to be free; not to shackle himself to another, not for such another! The pangs of jealousy subsided; and, in comparison, all others seemed supportable. It did her good. The intense pain of the one feeling seemed to annihilate that of the other.

"And to think of his being gone to Bath just as I came home! Is it not cruel? Is it possible he can care for me the least in the world? And yet Harriet Manvers, the last time she was here, vowed that he was dying for me. And she said, the very little notice he ever took of me in company was a certain proof, for that his eyes were never off me when he could do it unobserved. Now tell me what you think of it, Hernana?"

"I have seen you so little together, that I cannot pretend to be a judge; but I should say—" and she hesitated.

"What would you say? Out with it!"

"But you will not like to hear it."

"Not if you are going say that you think he don't care for me; to be sure, I should not like that. For, in the first place, I'm positive it's false; and in the second, you cannot possibly know. So pray don't torment and teaze me with any doubts about that, which I have every reason upon earth to be certain is a fact."

Again Hernana's heart began to sink. Oh! how she longed to question, to lead this somewhat indiscreet young lady to a full avowal of all she thought and felt; but it seemed to her scarcely honourable to accept the confession of another's feelings when she so resolutely concealed her own. She was silent; which rather provoked the other young lady, who thus ran on:

"I am sure, if implied compliments and pres-

sure of the hand, and standing by the piano-forte whilst I am playing, and all sorts of little things mean anything, there has been no want of them! And I must say, and shall always, that Philip Gorhambury has used me excessively ill if he means nothing; but he must mean something, and I am sure he does mean something, though he *is* gone to Bath. Now do tell me what I ought to think; I assure you the last time I saw him, and that was in London—"

"You met in London!"

"To be sure we did; why do you look so oddly? I declare, Hernana, you are half-crazy this morning. Why, in the name of goodness should we *not* meet in London, if you please?"

"Oh, I don't know! No reason in the world; only I did not know that you had."

"That's not very wonderful, I should think. I suppose Mr. Philip Gorhambury does not render an account of his sayings and goings on

to you! Yes, though you don't happen to be aware of it, we *did* meet in London. And Harriet Manvers said, that his attentions were very particular; but, for my part, I wish he had been a little more explicit—sometimes he seemed as if he would, sometimes as if he would not. You know, papa was always so glad to see him, and made so much of him, that he was forced to talk a vast deal to *him*, when Harriet Manvers said she was positive he was dying to be talking to me; and yet, if papa would go out of the room, he didn't often seem to care to come; he'd chat with mamma, or any one else, or turn over the pages of a book, rather than, as it would seem, come up to me; but Harriet said that was mere shyness and awkwardness, and yet of all men upon earth, Philip seems to me least troubled with those sort of things. What do *you* think?"

"I do not think, to speak honestly, that *I should* be quite of your friend Miss Manvers' opinion. I do *not* think Mr. Philip Gorham-

bury shy, and I do think if he loved you, he would not keep you in ignorance of it; for why should he?"

"I am sure I can't guess why he should, for I wish papa and mamma didn't show quite so much as they do, how they would like to have him for a son-in-law. Men are such queer creatures, Harriet Manvers says. I should not wonder if he felt himself too secure; I've a good mind to plague him well by flirting with somebody else, and there are plenty would be glad enough. Do tell me what you think, will you, Hernana? There you sit, looking with such an odd face, not saying a word to comfort me—*so* different from Harriet Manvers."

"I really do not know what to say—because—because I have not seen you much together; but I own by your account, I do not think Mr. Philip Gorhambury is attached to you."

"Oh, you don't—don't you?" in a voice of pique. "Then perhaps you think he is attached to some one else. You, for instance?"

"Oh, not to me!" replied Hernana faintly.

"I should think not. *You*, of all people in the world! Well, that is the last thing I should suspect Philip Gorhambury of. Take my word for it, love in a cottage, is not Philip Gorhambury's taste. The delightful creature, he deserves a palace, and he knows he does, and I am only afraid he flies too high for poor me—but I protest you look uncommon odd. You are not in love with him yourself, I do hope, Hernana? That *would* be wretched work for you!"

"Oh, don't trouble yourself about me. I am used to take care of myself."

"That's it, however," said Maria, lowering her voice. "That's my secret fear—that he is flying at higher game than me; for you cannot think how excessively he is flattered and admired; and then, besides, he will have such a fine fortune you know, and though Mr. Gorhambury is a horrid, odd sort of a reserved savage, that nobody likes, everybody's excessively charmed with Mrs. Gorhambury; she is the most accomplished creature in the world.

So he really might choose where he pleased, and I should not think of hoping about it, if it were not for little looks, and signs, and speeches, that one cannot misunderstand, and which convince me he loves none but me. But, oh! how shall I bring him to declare himself? for Harriet Manvers says, every man on earth wants a landing-net, and I am sure Lady Maria will never take the trouble to handle one for me."

This somewhat vapid conversation is given as a specimen of various conversations of the same nature, which took place between Hernana and Maria, during the short interval of time which elapsed before Mr. Lovel, his daughter, and Lady Aylmer set out upon their journey.

Though beginning with the most absolute disbelief in the existence of any partiality upon the part of Philip towards Miss Westmore, as these revelations proceeded and became rather more

detailed, the wretched Hernana could not conceal from herself that either Maria, misled by her wishes, exaggerated very much, or that Philip was behaving excessively ill to them both; playing a false and treacherous game, the temptations to which, the more she reflected upon them, the less she could understand.

It was easy to believe that his fancy might have been attracted by the pretty face of Maria, and by her unaffected, though rather childish manners; but if so, why did he make any reserve or difficulty about declaring his passion and making proposals for a marriage, which it was plain would be the most agreeable thing in the world to all parties concerned? And oh! if loving and thinking of another, how could he—how dare he—have been, what during her whole life he had more or less been to her—and most of all throughout these last few weeks so dear and precious to her memory?

Could those looks, those tones, those little bursts of involuntary feeling; those broken sentences, half uttered, half called back; those

innumerable tokens which the heart alone understands—oh! could all these have been only a mockery? Could Philip Gorhambury be such a vile, heartless, practised deceiver as that would amount to? Impossible!

No, he loved her! he must love her! But then, Maria! In that case, how account for his conduct to her; for make what allowances she would for Maria's wish to be deceived, still there was no denying that much which she had related had an appearance of truth. Her wretchedness was extreme.

She knew not what to think—what to do. Her feelings were all in confusion. At times abandoned to that intense longing for a happiness which seemed to have been once within her grasp, but was now withdrawn! Or was it really withdrawn? The doubt, the suspense, was what so hampered her feelings. Doubt! Terrible doubt!

Could she but have come to some conclusion —could she but have been convinced, either of Philip's truth, or of his infidelity, as she thought,

she could have borne it. One great struggle, and she felt she should have resolution to disentangle her heart. One bold blow of severance! and, though it would have been bitter as the stroke of death, it would have been over; and from that time forth her cure would begin. Time, which could do nothing for her now, would do everything for her then; as day passed after day, she must, in spite of herself, become better

Ah! it is uncertainty—cruel, wearing, helpless, uncertainty—which robs so many a cheek of its colour, and fades and withers so many a form.

Those who can end this horrid suspense when they will, are little aware of the tortures they inflict, when, sometimes heedlessly, sometimes through self-distrust, sometimes with pre-meditation, they occasion them.

CHAPTER XI.

"My child," said Lady Aylmer, as Hernana entered her little drawing-room, "what *does* ail you? My love, I fear you have tried your strength too far, in these unremitting attentions to your dear father. I thought you looked ill some days ago; but since Friday the change for the worse has been frightfully rapid. You are altered in a manner that alarms me. Come here, dear child of my heart. Kind and good Hernana, come here, and lay your head against this poor aching bosom of mine, and tell me, my love, what it is; or shall I?—shall I?" She went on, after having gazed upon

the wan, worn countenance for a few moments with unspeakable anxiety and affection: "Shall I—not ask, but guess—venture to guess, my darling?"

And she took her hand, with that expression of deep feeling and sympathy upon her countenance, which no countenance was more fitted to express than Lady Aylmer's, for her long, long sorrow, the heart wound she carried within, and which time seemed unable to soften, would seem to have moulded her features into something most refined and spiritual, and singularly calculated to express every emotion of the soul.

The character of the face was so tender as it looked at Hernana, the sympathy with sorrow so sincere — sympathy, such as those who have known much silent and deep-seated sorrow, are alone, perhaps, capable of feeling!

Lady Aylmer was one of the most interesting, as she was the most consoling of friends and comforters.

"Nay, do not turn your head away," which

had been Hernana's first natural impulse, but she did not yield to it; she fixed her eyes upon those of her friend—eyes so full of sadness—that they seemed to acknowledge that she had guessed right—to acknowledge that Lady Aylmer was in possession of her secret. "Is it so? I was afraid. Nay, I do not know why I should say I was afraid, except from, perhaps, a natural misgiving, where that name to me so fatal, is engaged; but I would not be prejudiced against the son by my dislike of the parents. You may trust me, Hernana. I can and I will love Philip Gorhambury for your sake. If—but why do you look so sad? It cannot be possible that after all I saw, little as that might be — but enough — it cannot be possible that he is gone. But I hear that he *is* gone, and has left you still in uncertainty as to his intentions!"

Hernana made no reply. She sat down upon the sofa where Lady Aylmer was still forced for the greater part of the day to recline, though, in the ardour of her conversation, she had

half risen from it, and was now sitting up, and continued to hold Hernana's hand, and gaze at her with the most affectionate anxiety.

"You do not speak! Nay, surely, my love, I hope it cannot be so."

"Yes, it is so," was all Hernana could reply.

"You cannot mean it! Gone! and said nothing! But it must be for a very short time, then. He must very soon be intending to return?"

"I do not know. No, I think Mrs. Gorhambury said the time of his return was quite uncertain: he was away for she knew not how long."

"Mrs. Gorhambury! My dear, never mind what Mrs. Gorhambury says: we all know *her*. She will not hesitate at endeavouring to make you believe that to be true which she wishes to be true. If from Mrs. Gorhambury alone you have heard that Philip has gone away in this strange, inexplicable manner, (for a long time, and without explaining himself), depend upon it she deceives you, and perhaps herself;

for Philip Gorhambury loves you, Hernana. I am not, I think, a self-flatterer, nor very apt to flatter my friends; and experience has made me very distrustful of those appearances by which girls are led to persuade themselves that a man is seriously attached to them. But I do not think I am deceived here; I could stake my life upon it, that man loves you."

Hernana did not speak, but she turned her eyes upon her friend with such a sudden flash of joy.

"And so tell me, my dear, how you parted; for I feel sure he could not part from you, without betraying, by some word or look, what was to be read in every glance, and heard trembling in every sentence, when I saw you together. Come, come — I know that mere absence throws one into such low spirits, that it gives a dark colour to everything. Alas! I know it all so well! I have tried it all so truly! and I seem to live it over again in you, my dear, dear girl."

"He did not take leave. He went away

without even trying to see me, suddenly, and so unkindly! How could he—how could he have so little feeling for me?"

"Went away without taking leave of you?"

"Ah, Lady Aylmer!"

"My dear child!"

"You could not speak with such confidence of his attachment *now?*" said Hernana, gloomily.

"My own love! I do not know what to think or say."

"You think it, then, so very strange, so very unkind, so—so significant?"

She uttered the last word as if she could hardly articulate it.

"Alas! my own dear child, what *can* I say?"

"It seems," resumed Lady Aylmer, after the pause of a few moments, "as if I must have little stability of judgment, to change my opinion so suddenly, and, as some might think, on such light grounds; but I will not disguise what I think from you, my child;

for I know you have a brave and magnanimous heart, and that you know a woman's duty—her hard, but her most imperative duty! My Hernana will not sacrifice a life given her for high purposes—will not make the misery of those who love her, for the sake of such a one as this is. You are a noble, good girl, Hernana: you must think of this man no more."

She made no answer.

"That sounds to you like the sentence of death," said Lady Aylmer.

"It does; and worse! far worse!"

"I know it; I know it! What is physical death—once and over—to the *living* death of the heart? that death which does not kill! Ah, child! child! I know it too well. It is here, here—hope dead! happiness dead! love dead! everything dead! Everything dead, but one's miserable self."

"Yes—I see, I understand; but do not say *you* have no hope—oh, do not say that. I thought you lived upon hope."

"Upon the shadow of it—yes; but it is a shadow that grows fainter and fainter every day; and, indeed, it is beginning, of late, to take strange fantastic forms of misery!" Lady Aylmer went on to say, not in heartless forgetfulness of the younger heart's sorrows, but willing to divert their bitterness by sympathy with her own—"of late, to take strange fantastic forms of misery. For him that I lost—a lovely child—is by this time a child no more: he is a boy—a man!—and so I never, never can find my lost, my darling little one again! And then, when I think to what he may have been exposed—what a boy, what a man he may have become!—what I may find, if ever I do find—oh, it is hideous! hideous!"

And the wretched mother, now entirely absorbed with her own anguished reflections, covered her eyes with her hands, as if to shut out some dreadful image.

Love is a strange, strange thing. However intense and bitter the sufferings, it seems to shrink ashamed before more substantial sorrows. It

seems aware of its own somewhat evanescent nature, and stronger than death itself, in its passionate anguish to stand abashed, when the voice of other grief is heard. Rachel mourning for her children! What love complaint would dare mingle itself with the horror of that sound? Can Hero dare to weep, when Niobe is there? So Hernana felt: ashamed of her sorrow, abashed, and as if conscience-stricken before the heart's cry of that wretched mother.

The feeling was salutary. A new current was given to her thoughts, before the dreadful anxieties and uncertainties of the bereaved mother, her griefs appeared as trifling—as nothing. Yet her anguish was, in truth, as acute, more acute, more agonising, if possible. Yet there was, I know not what, wanting. But I will not attempt to account for the fact; satisfied that the experience of every heart that feels will bear me out in it.

Lady Aylmer sat, her face covered with her hands, a prey to one of those paroxysms of grief and horror by which she was overwhelmed,

whenever the idea of her lost child was presented to her in this, the most wretched of all its varying aspects of wretchedness; for, happily, no sorrow of this nature can take a permanent aspect, it changes with the spirits, sometimes hope predominating, sometimes sinking into the depths of despair; but at least the misery of a fixed idea is thus escaped, and the mind preserved from madness. The presence of actual sorrow in another shape, was here useful to the poor mother, as to the love-crossed girl. Both hearts were so really generous and good, that their sympathy was a help to each other.

"It is very selfish of me," said Lady Aylmer, raising her head. "How can I be so selfish? Dearest girl, forgive me! There are moments, when that idea presents itself, when all the little fortitude I have gives way. And, as time rolls on, I fancy him growing and changing—growing and changing. That thought gets more and more persistent—more and more terrible. Oh! forgive me, my love, I am very selfish! and, with your pale cheek before me,

can I think of anything—anything else? My own, dear girl, forgive me."

"Ah! Lady Aylmer, do not speak so. If you knew how ashamed I feel of my grief in the presence of your awful sorrow. But I will bear my portion as I ought—indeed, indeed, I will! I am not going to be a burden upon your spirits, or a source of sorrow and anxiety to my dear father. No, believe me; I can, and I will."

Yes, the presence of this awful sorrow, as well she might call it, brought her back at once from those regions of passion into which, under the fascinations of Philip Gorhambury, she had been wandering, restoring her to reality, to duty, to goodness, to resignation, and the wholesome everyday life.

Yes, that was the harassing anxiety, the

dark and terrible idea, which had gradually been gaining strength in Lady Aylmer's mind, and every year added to the sum of accumulated pain. For a long time she had continued to think of her lost one as still the little, innocent, helpless, beautiful, baby-boy. She had still clung firmly to the idea that he would be restored to her, and restored much as she had lost him.

But time wore away, weeks accumulated into months, and months into years, and still not the slightest tidings of him reached her. The silence of the grave seemed indeed to have closed over him, and every one of her friends were so convinced that this was really the case, that their looks of sad despair, when she would speak of him as still living, and a something bordering upon disapprobation, which she could detect, as if she were indulging in a dangerously morbid fancy, were so disagreeable to her, that for some time

she had ceased to mention him to any one but Hernana.

Not that her faith was in the least impaired. She calculated upon his reappearance with that sort of absolute certainty, which make some of our previsions assume all the reality of prophecy; and it was the consolation of her life that this faith, she had been able to impart to Hernana, who, young and sanguine, was ready to believe what she so ardently desired might prove true.

But since the painful ideas above alluded to had taken possession of Lady Aylmer's mind, even this long cherished hope ceased to be a consolation. The dreadful idea that this child so ardently desired, might, exposed to every possible evil influence, be growing up a wretched, perverted human being, was so horrible, that at times the most fervent prayer that Hernana could offer for her friend was, that all these fluctuations of hope and

terror might be merged in the assurance, in some way or other, that the child had perished in his infancy.

It was but a melancholy party that at length set out upon the expedition to Cornwall. Mr. Lovel so ill, and, added to the present suffering, there was occasion for the most serious anxiety as regarded the future, it seeming to be very doubtful, whether he would ever be enabled to resume his duties. In that case, what was to become of them? If that resource failed him, what were they to do? Besides, he loved his profession; his whole heart and soul were devoted to it; life seemed to have lost all interest and purpose when he could no longer do good.

Lady Aylmer was more than usually depressed: she felt low at removing from G——.

It was painful to go so much further from the spot where her child had disappeared, and where she still hoped he might one day or other reappear; and yet, on the contrary, when she thought of the distant secluded country to which they were bound, she cherished some faint, vague expectation, that there, among its mysterious wilds, she might hear of him.

These things made her silent, sad and preoccupied. The mood of these her companions allowed Hernana, however, more leisure and quiet for the battle with her heart in which she had engaged, and so far perhaps was well. That conversation with Lady Aylmer, a comparison of her own sorrow, with the dreadful anxieties of her friend, and still more with the depression and melancholy of her father, helped her. It aroused all that was generous within her heart to the resolve that she would not prove a burden to those already so heavily

burdened. She knew it was vain to talk, but so long as she should indulge herself in these sad regrets, these intense longings after happiness, she could be neither of service nor of consolation to those who so greatly needed both. Pity, and a generous desire to comfort and support those she loved, rescued her from the depression into which she had at first fallen. She shook off the insidious weakness that had invaded her, and resolved to look her situation courageously in the face.

Days had passed, and weeks had passed, and Philip Gorhambury had not returned, neither had he written one line to her. His mother got a letter now and then, the contents of which she communicated at the Deanery, and through Maria, Hernana learned that he was passing his time in the gayest manner, and that he was thinking of nothing less than returning home. He talked of proceeding direct to Paris, and of his mother joining him there, but

did not appear to have the least intention of visiting G—— before his departure.

Maria spent her time, when with Hernana, partly in lamentations, partly in fits of anger. Sometimes she grieved over her own want of power to fix the dear deluder; at others, inveighed against the selfish inconstancy of man.

Hernana did her best to console her, and to encourage her to persist in the efforts she professed to be making to drive the deceiver from her thoughts; and as she did so, she laid the lesson to her own heart.

And so we will leave her in the exercise of the true and cardinal virtue of woman —that of ruling the tender affections with courage and severity. Denying herself every vain indulgence of self-flattery, she resolutely drove from her memory those recollections of tones and looks which had deceived

her. She steadily held before her eyes the facts of the case—that he was gone, when he might have staid, a voluntary exile from the place where, if he truly loved, he would most upon earth have desired to remain. That he had not spoken, when there was nothing to prevent him speaking; had not written, when there was nothing to prevent him writing—nothing, except his own ambition and worldliness, and the ambition and worldliness of his mother. If these were enough to prevent him doing that which truth, and honour, and affection so imperiously commanded him to do, what was there left to hope, or even to wish?

If such was his character, why vainly expect it would change? Character does not change. As well may you wait till the river ceases to flow, as wait for a man to alter from what he is.

Such were the things she said to herself; and she fought the hard fight, and fought it

bravely and well. She was one resting firmly too upon that best of strengths—the cheerful confidence that we live actually, really, and unfailingly, under a government merciful and good, far — far above the things of this world.

We will leave her then to the sharp contest with herself, and to the performance of the pious duties to which she is devoted—and we will return to the child, who *we* know lives, and is surrounded by physical and moral peril, greater than the darkest imagination of the mother could have pictured.

CHAPTER XII.

YEARS have passed away. The scene has changed with them. The gipsies have wandered far and near; have visited almost every green lane and barren moor in the island; and are now encamped in one of those deep, secluded valleys which lie upon the southern coast of Kent and Sussex.

The hills in this part of the country are steep and abrupt, running in long parallel lines, bare of all foliage, and covered over with short grass, or heath. Between them lie those deep and narrow valleys, which seem almost cut off from all communication with the rest of the world.

As the road traverses the heights, you look down into these secluded nooks, where perhaps a few tall trees surround the small parish church, with its low, square tower, and humble roof; round which, a farm-house or two, and a few cottages may be seen nestling. Sometimes the course of a stream may be traced through the valley; but most often, this is not the case.

There they lie, these little villages, looking so solitary, so obscure! very lodges in the surrounding wilderness.

These valleys were favourite haunts of the gipsies. They loved the seclusion in which they could remain hidden, and the wide expanse of country which they could traverse in pursuit of their various occupations; and most of all, they loved the peculiar opportunities for engaging in smuggling transactions—then at their height, for it was during the long war.

Claribert of Avon is now a youth of about sixteen; Big Ben is a man of twenty; Hesther, though comparatively young in years, is

become quite a withered old woman. The consuming fire within seems to have burnt away all of youth, of human feeling, and almost all of human substance that was in her.

This is the first time she has ventured to quit the desolate mountains, extending from Lancashire to the south of Scotland, where she and her tribe had sojourned for so many years in the trackless wilderness, concealed from the pursuit so long kept up by Lady Aylmer, now in utter despair almost abandoned. The security has been so complete, the tradition of the story has so long faded into silence, that it had died away almost from the memory of the tribe itself.

There were moments when some action out of the common, some look, some gesture, the flashing blue eye, and the golden hair, reminded an old crone of an old story; but nothing was said. The tribe is busy with its own affairs—its fortune-telling, its horse-jockeying, and its various other schemes, more or less honest, in

pursuit of gain. The stranger ceases to be regarded in particular. He has long circulated among the boys of the tribe, as if one of them; for Hesther has grown languid and dispirited; her fervour and energy have forsaken her; and she ceases to claim for her adopted son those privileges and immunities for which she once strove so fiercely. Whether it were that the restless gnawing of conscience within had worn away all of pride that once mingled with her affection, or whether that the dread which for ever haunted her, that he might be torn away, rendered her content, and even desirous, as he grew older, that he should mingle with the common herd, I cannot say; but certainly, during the whole of this period of his life, Charlie has been allowed to mingle indiscriminately with the rest.

There the encampment lies before you. About half a dozen magnificent elms and beeches form a sort of irregular semi-circle round a green unenclosed spot, removed about a quarter of a mile from the village. A

rippling brook, running between the long and verdant grass, over bright blue and golden pebbles, trinkles down this valley, the neighbourhood of fresh water being what these gipsies, above all things, loved. Their tents, or, rather hovels, are pitched irregularly about the little plain, in the centre of which, and down the lane into which it gradually narrows, rough, ragged horses and asses are scattered about browsing. Sundry carts, covered and uncovered, were drawn up, with their shafts in the air, round about.

The evening twilight has already fallen in the valley, though the sun elsewhere is yet above the horizon. The gipsy fires are lighted, and their lurid flames and smoke rise and mingle not unpleasingly with the topmost branches of the trees.

The yelp of the numerous dogs; the hoarse voices of men and boys; the shrill tones of the women; and the laughter, now and then, of the children, mingle with the other sounds in a sort of stilly confusion.

The people are assembled in groups, and seem busily engaged in the discussion of some subject which occupies all their attention. Rapid conversation is going on, and from time to time different individuals may be seen detaching themselves from the several groups, and going towards the entrance of the deep lane which leads between high hedges into the far country. They seem to be looking down it, as if in expectation of an arrival; but no one comes.

Disappointed they return to the fires, from one of which the voice of lamentation is heard. A giantess of a woman, with skin the colour of bronze, long tresses of black dishevelled hair, hanging in volumes round her face, huge, sinewy arms, and the shoulders of a female Hercules, is venting her grief, mingling her sorrow with execrations.

"To think of him! My Ben, of all! The last I should have thought as ever would have been taken, so 'cute as he was! Never found out in a trick in his life! No; there wasn't one of you understood the sly like him; to say

nothing of his good brawny arm; except, indeed, that white-haired, white-livered chick of a lad, who goes sneaking about, and doing nobody knows what, and saying nobody cares what; half hypocrite, half thief! He's better on the sly than my Ben himself; a young rascal! and I'll be hanged if he han't a hand in getting my Ben into this brostle, for all the fine face he puts upon it!"

"What are you saying there?" exclaims a low, stern, hoarse, hollow voice, which comes as if from the sepulchre. It has that tone which tells of decaying physical life within, when the life of the soul still burns with all its brightness. From the worn, thin spectre of a tall, dark, wasted woman, one bright hectic spot upon either cheek, and eyes whose gloomy darkness is all now lighted up with rage, it proceeds: "What are you saying there? What are you saying of my Charlie? Say it again! say it again, if you dare! You know he is an angel of light, come down, nobody knows how, here, among the

fiends of the pit, and you dare compare him with your ruffian, Ben!"

"I do, and I dare! Better be a bold, brave ruffian, and defy the law, than a fair-faced, smooth-tongued, sneaking hypocrite, who'll take care of his own skin, and keep his own neck out of the noose, let who will suffer for it! Ay, Hesther, you may glare, and flame, and look, as I'll be bound you did when you gripped I know who; but I've said it once, and I'll say it again, —villain for villain, cheat for cheat, thief for thief, better ten hundred thousand times be a bold, honest villain, a bold, honest cheat, a bold, honest thief, passing for what he is, and no better than he is, like my Ben, than a crouching, praying, psalm-singing hypocrite, like your fine gentleman, prying and prowling about, nobody knows where or for what; and all the time being as 'cute with the hand, and as ready upon the sly as any thief engro' among us!

"You lie!" cried Hesther, furiously, "you lie! Charlie is no thief; Charlie is no cheat; Charlie is no vile poisoner of pigs, and filcher

of ducks and fowls! Fine things to boast of, if boast you must! He! he never took so much as the value of a hair, which was not his own; and what is he doing now? What is he doing now? whilst all the rest of you are crowding round your flesh-pots of Egypt here. What? but gone down to the town amid the thick of them all, to see his friend righted. Maybe they've taken him up, too, and sent him to prison, for who knows what one of them fine magistrates may do? but none of them can prove that, which never was; and his pure blood speaks in his cheek before the world!"

"It does, does it? Mighty pure! See, if he don't bamboozle Hesther, as well as the rest of ye, with his double tongue and looks? But he can't take in *me*; he can't take in me!" repeated the gipsy, shaking her head ominously.

The debate was interrupted just as Hesther was about to make an indignant reply, by a general shout; and a thin, slender figure, somewhat but not much above the middle size, was

seen by the moonlight, slowly approaching up the lane.

"Here he comes at last! here he comes at last! What cheer? what fare?"

The figure was still at some distance when these eager voices saluted him, and heads were stretched forth, and eyes starting almost out of their sockets with eagerness, as the mingled crowd of men, women, and boys, looked down the lane.

It was a close green lane, with high banks, between which, under the wear and tear of ages, the way had sunk many feet below the surface of the surrounding country. The banks were ornamented with daisies, jasmines, and violets, the honey-suckle climbed aloft, waving her sweet head to the breeze, and strayed among the stout branches of hazel and willow, that now shot upwards, now across the lane, embowering it, at intervals, and flinging heavy masses of shadow, amid the bright gleams of the moonlight.

Up this beautiful lane the youth slowly

advanced; his air was deeply depressed and melancholy. Hesther had followed with the rest; had, as was her custom, pushed her way imperiously through the throng of busy faces, and stood leaning against a green knoll of earth, watching the approach of Charlie. His eyes were bent upon the ground; he seemed moody, thoughtful, and unhappy; but, as the loud shouts of his assembled fellows greeted him, he raised his head, looked forward, quickened his pace, and was soon among them. They gathered round him thick as bees, with faces eagerly lifted up to his.

"Well, well, what cheer? What did you do? Where did you go? Did you see the bigwigs? speak to his worship himself? And what did his reverend worship say?"

These, uttered in a half-feigned, half-genuine tone of contempt, were the sentences which greeted him upon every side. They left him no time to answer; yet was he about to speak, when the tall woman, seizing him rudely by

the arm, and griping it as if she would make her fingers meet in the flesh, said, in a tone of scornful reproach:

"You haven't brought him back with you, then?"

"No, mother," turning upon her that beautiful fair face, so full of majesty and serenity. "No, mother; they would not let him go."

"Wouldn't! oh, we wait upon would and could. Didn't like it, eh? So, that is all you got for your fine daring, thrusting your head into the lion's mouth—into his worship's own parlour—is it? I thought how it would be."

"Mother, you know I could not help it. You know I would have done it if I could," replied the youth, with some emotion. "You *know* I would if I could; but oh, mother—!"

"Well! speak out, can't you? What have they done with my brave, Big Ben?"

"Mother, he is committed."

"Committed!" shrieked the gipsy, "my own Big Ben! my brave, free bird of the woods!

my wild youngster of the moors—committed! Between four walls, and the sweet air of heaven, and the sky, and the sun, and the fields, and the trees, all shut out! In a baleful dungeon! and the irons on him—the irons on him! Oh, Ben! my Ben! my own, own Ben! What hast thou done? what hast thou done?"

The youth looked down, and shame and grief were written in his fair face, but he said nothing.

"If he had been rich, the foul wretches, would they not have admitted him to bail? If he'd been one of them Gorgios—a gentle like, with a cambric shirt and a fine coat on his back, wouldn't they have admitted him to bail? See if they wouldn't have. No four walls for them! No; they'd have— But why, you lazy, stupid ass," turning fiercely to Charlie, "why could your smooth tongue not find a word to say for him? I warrant you could have found more words than enough to get him set at liberty if you had pleased?"

"No," said Charlie, gently disengaging him-

self from her gripe, "no, I could have said nothing."

An expression of the deepest grief, shame, and mortification mingled, were visible upon his face whilst he spoke.

"You could have said *nothing!* you could have said nothing in his defence! Nothing?"

"No; because the accusation was *true.*"

He uttered this in so low a voice that the meaning reached only herself.

"True! what do you mean, you winney-looking coward, by that? What *accusation*, if you please, since such fine long words is the go? What, but he'd pocketted an apple, or, may be, taken an egg out of a hen's nest in a hedge! that's the sum of the mighty *accusation*, if we must all learn sitcher fine words! And it was *true*, was it?"

Charlie only shook his head mournfully, but said no more. The curious crowd would leave him to Big Ben's mother no longer; they began to press, and squeeze, and jostle about him, overwhelming him with questions as to what

was become of their favourite and champion, the Samson of the band.

The answers were given painfully and reluctantly; and yet it was plain that there was something more than the mere sorrowful fact of Big Ben having been committed to prison, which weighed so heavily upon the youth's heart.

"Did you follow him to prison? Did you see my bold boy in his cage, at least? his cage! beating his wings, poor hawk of the wilderness, against the wires. Did you care, or heed, or think to do so much as that?—visit him in his cage—Master Primrosy-face."

"Yes," said Charlie, "I followed in the crowd as they took him to prison."

"And where did they lodge him? My darling bird of the mountain."

"Literally in the cage," said Charlie, with a faint melancholy smile.

"Shame! shame!" resounded on all sides. "I know the cage," cries one.

"Ay, aye, you have tasted the inside of it

yourself, and all for an old white hen as tough as a halter!" cries another.

At which last sally there was a general laugh.

"And I say, it would be a black shame to put a Christian vagabond, far more a bold child of Egypt, into such a hole as that."

"It *is* a hole," repeated Charlie.

"Ay, is it?" cried the mother, again pushing forward, seizing his arm, and fixing her flashing eyes upon his face, but with less of animosity than impatience this time; "then you *did* go in, after all; you did follow my child to his dungeon? That's not so bad of him, Hesther, either, is it?"

"I should think not," said Hesther scornfully.

"But what sort of a place is it? Tell me, and is my lad in a dungeon, and is he in irons?"

"I'm surprised you can be asking such childish questions, Bet," interposed a man. "Why only to hear the sweet innocent, one

would think as how it had never tasted a prison itself."

At which there was another general laugh; to which Bet only responded by giving a furious scowl round. But Charlie answered gently, saying:

"It's not a dungeon, not under ground; but it is cold, and hard, and sadly small, with a stone floor, and only a stone bench to rest on. That is as well as I could see through the window, which is barred and cross-bound over."

"The window! See through the window! Then it's not one o' those confounded courts, with high walls, and big gates, enough to make one's heart die within one, only to look at them! How did you get at the window?"

"The window looks into the street."

"And Ben can put his face to one side, and you can glue yours to the other?"

She waited for no answer: she turned away, and the next moment might be seen striding through the flickering moonlight of the green lane, a giant, threatening figure.

No sooner was she gone, than the interest taken in the fate of Big Ben, which had caused every one to hurry from their untasted suppers, began to subside before the calls of appetite. The group began to break up, and individuals to betake themselves to their fires, where the seething pot was bubbling temptingly, every now and then giving evidence of hidden treasures, as one substance after another rose to the surface; whilst an odorous savour of very good things, was diffused through the air.

True flesh-pots of Egypt were these.

The misfortunes of poor Ben were forgotten in the hurry and avidity, with which each seized upon, and began to devour his portion of the mess, such as that with which the immortal Meg Merrilies regaled the not less immortal Dominie. They sat upon the turf round their crackling fires, and from beechen platters of their own fashioning, helped themselves with wooden spoons of their own manufacturing. They laughed and gossipped, and boasted and

defied, and told wild stories of the life of the road, as they called it, of hair-breadth escapes, ingenious thefts and devices, scoffing at and deriding the civilized life they despised, relating tales directed to the bringing all that is reverend, but more especially their worshipfuls the magistrates, into ridicule; and defying, to use their own phrase, "the devil and Doctor Faustus."

So they laughed and chatted in good fellowship at least, if in nothing else good.

But Charlie sat apart with Hesther.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEY sat apart by the door of their hut, and beside a fire which, low and smouldering through its embers, still gave forth a fervent heat. Hesther sat there, supporting her elbows upon her raised knees, and her face upon her hands.

Her black hair fell in masses over hands and face, but did not cover her eyes; which burning like two lurid lamps in the gloom of a sepulchre, might be seen shining ominously between her fingers.

She was watching her foster-son, who sat upon the opposite side of the fire. His arms were folded, his head sinking upon his breast; he was lost in what was evidently, most painful rumination.

Long did Hesther gaze at him with those deep, gloomy, thoughtful eyes of hers; in profound silence she sat and gazed. She loved to do so. There was nothing she loved so well as to sit perfectly still, and pass away her life, as it were, gazing at Claribert. She has sat by his side, when wearied he has thrown himself upon the turf and fallen asleep—motionless, gazing for hours and hours.

Watching, not so much to ward him from evil, for all her old terrors for his safety, or her still greater fears of being robbed of him, had long subsided — but simply to gaze, to feed her doting, aching affection with his beauty, with his image !

And so she sat now, watching him. But there was anxiety and sympathy mingled at this

time with the fascination, that was wont to rivet her eyes upon that face. Claribert was evidently wretched.

They sat long in this silence—a length of time that would have worn out our patience; but the denizen of the woods is patient, and silent, and brooding. It might be a couple of hours that thus passed away, and the night was now far advanced. One by one the fires of the encampment had gone out, and the trees no longer umbered by their light, raised their tall, giant tops black against the sky, which was all alive with large, glittering stars, twinkling in their everlasting motion, as if pouring forth light from their urns.

Hesther at last spoke.

"Charlie," she said, "what ails you? Sorry you are, that Big Ben is in the cage, I know that—for you loved him, more than was need—more than was need, perhaps. But something other is plaguing you now. I know your face—there, Hesther has read it since you were

a blessed infant! Strange looks it has—things in it I see, that it is not for such as Hesther to understand. Lines from that other world, I don't know their speech. They are too bright and beautiful for Hesther's eyes, deep mysteries are they to me; and now, thy looks are a mystery too, Charlie, only this I can discern, that something ails thee—something more than common ails thee!"

He lifted up his head and raised his eyes. Those beautiful, pure, eyes, in which, indeed, you saw a world of wild, and lofty, and spiritual thought—beautiful in truth, transcendantly beautiful!

Such was their beauty, so penetrating, so sublime, that no one, be he who he might, could look upon those eyes unmoved. How much less she, thus strangely witched by the rare Saxon beauty, so foreign to her race.

"Yes, Hesther," he said, "there *is* something working here. It has been stirring long, but

this day, this night, the something within me seems coming to a crisis. There is great pain and anguish—terrible pain and anguish—but I feel, I do feel, that when this is gone through, something better will come, something better *must* come—things cannot, shall not, must not go on so any longer."

"What do you mean?—what do you mean?" she was always ready to take alarm, when the one, to her most fearful subject, was approached. "This life can't go on—mustn't go on? What do you mean? What other life would you have? What other life are you fit for? What other life is there for you? Can't, shan't, musn't go on! What do you mean?"

"Mean! Oh, Hesther! do you know? I thought, fool and blind!—they blinded me—willing to be blinded!—I thought it was in little things—I suffered my conscience to be hoodwinked. I thought it was only in little things; but, day by day, it has been coming clearer and clearer upon me, just as the sun rises and rises;

and suddenly there is a great burst of light, and one sees all at once—blue mountains, and rivers, and castles, and trees, and flowers, where everything before was mistiness and confusion! For the first time, now I see it! I see it! I had glimmerings before; but this last!—oh, it has burst it all open before me at once! Little, and daily! little, and daily!—fed in it, cradled in it, nursed in it, reared in it!—one and all, one and all pilfering, and over-reaching, and wronging, and defrauding!—deceit being like the very air in which all breathe; bad air, poisonous, corrupting, and defiling!—then blackening, till all is black! And now all this has brought forth its fruit—ripened it with its poisonous breath! just as I've seen a great stem of deadly nightshade growing up rank and venomous in a dunghill heap. Yes, it's come to fruit at last! Ben, Big Ben, is sent to gaol for a horrid, horrid crime!"

"Nay, then," cried Hesther, "I never thought that of Ben. I never thought he was bad—he would do like the rest of them, no doubt

—but no such great harm in that; but I never thought Ben would do what you call a crime."

"No such great harm," cried he; "no such great harm! Ay, that it is—that it is. I see it now. No such great harm! no such great harm! Oh, that is like the heap of leaves!—each a little thing, but one put to another, there is a great heap—a great putrid mass, upon which the deadly nightshade grows."

His were the accents of despair.

"Well, well, never mind. Don't fret and vex yourself. Little leaves or big leaves, deadly nightshade or not, *you* never carried one least leaf to the heap—never one, never one; no, not the smallest one: *I* took good care of that!" cried Hesther, in a voice of exultation.

"But if I did not, haven't I stood by and seen others do it? Add leaf to leaf!—leaf to leaf!"

"Well, and didn't you try to prevent 'em? as if even *you* could—as if an angel from heaven could! Oh, don't go and worry your-

self about what you couldn't help! As well try to roll these hills back into the sea."

"That has done till now!" he cried; and a sudden brightness, as of one inspired, flashed into his face; "that may have done till now; it has done. Someway I was satisfied with it, but I am satisfied no longer. Oh! for the sake of that wretched man, who's fallen into this crime, and of all he said about it—for I heard him: 'Beginnings of bad beginnings'—for his sake, something must be done —something *shall* be done. There must be better things going on somewhere. That dim, misty feeling, which you call nonsense, is *not* nonsense. Though you take care to keep me, and have always kept me, a wanderer in these wild places, there are better things, I feel sure. Why, that very church behind those trees—those decent farm-houses there—those decent people! It comes to me now! It is as if my eyes were suddenly opened — how can they have been shut so long? These poor creatures that we live among! There is a better life all

around us! everywhere around us! All people are not like these wretched, beggarly, cheats and swindlers—pilferers of hen-houses and hedges, living like beasts in dens and coverts—worse than beasts, living in wrong and baseness! And it must not be! My people! (if they *are* my people) it shall not be! Something I must do—I don't know what; but there is like a voice speaking and crying within me! Something must be done—I know not exactly what; but something must be done, to save myself and all of them."

"Save them! Save them from what? Child, you are gone mad this evening."

"No, no! I feel strangely, but I'm not mad, Hesther—not mad! Save them from what? Why from their misery and their wickedness."

And then as a gust of wind suddenly raised, as suddenly lulls, and down falls the gentle rain, the wild vehemence of the moment gave way, and down gushed a torrent of tears.

The mind and character of the unfortunate boy had lately been in fearful peril. From some of the expressions which in his distress he let fall, the real state of the case may be surmised.

It was not possible that, surrounded as he was by some of the most contemptible, if not the most hideous, forms of depravity and degradation, he could have long preserved untainted the purity and elevation of his principles. The dishonesty as regarded small things which was daily practised around him, could no longer escape his observation: what it was easy to hide from the undiscerning child, was betrayed by degrees to the discerning boy. The shock and disgust he at first felt could not but be in danger of gradually wearing away, living as he did in hourly and amicable association with those who practised these things.

That fatal habit of disregarding the wrong and the right in small things, was stealing upon him, and though never once had he sullied the innocence of his heart by wrong or dishonesty

in the minutest particular, yet he associated daily, and with pleasure, with those who did. The forbidden thing was in the camp, and he had ceased to denounce it.

He was getting accustomed to look upon such things as inevitable evils, and to regard his own scruples rather as needless refinements, than as everlasting truths.

Happily before the leaven had worked so far as vitally to change the pure substance upon which it had to act, the crime and consequent arrest of his friend Big Ben had aroused him, as from sleep, and awakened him to a vivid, almost transcendental perception of the situation in which they were all standing, and a horror, as of great distress, fell upon his soul.

All within was yet struggling confusion. He saw but he could not distinguish. He had sharp, fearful perceptions of evil, but they were like the pain of one dreaming, who cannot seize upon its object.

He saw that all around him was wrong,

hideously wrong, but where should he find the right?

Oh for the day-star to arise with healing on its wings! Scattering these obscure shadows, and making the night spectres flee before its brightness.

It did arrive at last.

Its beams shining over the heavens, visited this humble and darkened corner of this poor little earth of ours.

Under the pressure of his new thoughts and emotions, Charlie became as solitary as he had been when a child. He spent his time wandering alone over the downs that stretched far upon every side; sometimes sitting on the highest crest of a hill, gazing over the vast expanse of land and heaven, and distant view which enclosed him; sometimes buried in one of the loveliest valleys, watching the running brook, and the lambs disporting themselves by its side. His mind was in a wilderness of con-

fused thought, searching instinctively, but blindly, for something better, fairer, purer than the moral life around him; dimly observing, and yearning for that something which lay hidden under the beauteous veil which nature throws over the true and great realities.

He also made frequent pilgrimages to visit Big Ben, who was now removed to the county gaol, his offence being an unbailable felony. Gaols were at that time in their worst state of disorder, and what Charlie witnessed in those hideous dens of depravity and wretchedness, seemed to confirm the sort of moral despair into which he was falling.

It seemed to him as if the world was but one scene of disorder, barbarity, and wickedness, as if the very gipsies, whose manners and ways of thinking he was just learning to look upon with distrust and dislike, were angels of light compared to the other inhabitants of this soil.

Poor Big Ben felt it as he did; his gipsy blood could not brook the defilement of being brought into this daily, close, unavoidable asso

ciation with the very scum of the land. The poor fellow blubbered and lamented himself to his friend, and bemoaned his crime, but more the company into which it had thrown him. He lost flesh and spirits, and soon became but the shadow of himself. Alas! he had no one to whom to look, was without hope and without fear. He was no Christian, poor Big Ben; he had been born in a Christian community, reared in a Christian land, but what profited that to him? He had never heard the healing words of forgiveness, peace and hope; he knew not that this world, in which he had lived so untaught and unthinking, and which now was become such a world of sorrow to him; he knew not the treasure it contained in its revealed history. Thousands and thousands knew, but had never taught him, that One had been, and was still, Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who had arisen upon this darkness, with light and truth, making that darkness bright, and the rough places plain—that this sorrowful existence was not all—but was the fore-

runner and preface to another, and that a lovelier and a happier life lay behind it. No one of the thousands and thousands, had taught poor Big Ben this.

He was born in a Christian country, poor Big Ben! myriads around him were solaced every day by truths such as these, but they never reached him, no one had taken the trouble to search him out, and acquaint him with them. He had naturally a warm, grateful, honest heart of his own, but he had been left to himself, not to nature! Oh, no! but to the evil influences of a corrupted and depraved society. And now, step by step, from little to more, from big to bigger, he had been betrayed into the commission of a great crime. The fine, young, feeling being who now stands by him, in that low, dark prison cell, where all sorts of wickedness is going on; he—illuminating those impure regions as by an angel's presence, with his pure and beautiful countenance—is in that respect, little better off than himself. He has by a sort of instinct, and the proud care of the

woman who treasured him, been preserved, as yet, from the contamination of vice—that change which takes place when man, from associating with wrong, begin to practise it, and sin and he become one. He had been as yet preserved from that; but he was, in fact, little more enlightened than his poor, big, rough, blubbering friend.

These things went strangely with him. From every visit to the prison, Charlie returned home more thoughtful and depressed. Something he wanted, a something surely that was to be found. In his way to and from the county gaol, and even in the very gaol itself, he became acquainted with forms and figures of things that belonged to a better order of being; but there seemed to be a great gulf between him and them. It was as if some enchanted wall of separation was around him, which shut him out from communion with all, but those of his clan and kind.

CHAPTER XIV.

One day Charlie had wandered farther than usual, over the more solitary part of those downy highlands. He had quitted the beaten road, pursuing his way over hill beyond hill, lost in his melancholy thoughts. At last he began to feel weary. He had entered a valley, which, perfectly unhabited, ran winding from north to south; it was intersected by a little stream, upon the banks of which some of the black-nosed sheep of the country were cropping the scanty herbage.

A few sallows and alders fringed the brook, and the hills rose boldly upon either side;

it was a lonely yet a pleasing sight — so still and tranquil! The blue sky was bright over head, and every now and then, a large bird, kite or raven, might be seen slowly winging its way across the blue depths, the sun, casting his black shadow along the southern side of the hill.

It was a scene such as the boy loved, and he sat down upon a little hillock of grass to contemplate it. He then became aware, that the valley was not so entirely shut out from the world as he had at first imagined, for close by the brink of the streamlet, a narrow foot-path ran.

He pursued it a little way, and when the winding valley made a sudden turn, came suddenly upon a beautiful scene. There the brook abruptly widened, forming a little transparent pool, crowned with a group of alders, whose branches meeting formed a sort of bower, which was now thrown into shadow, for the sun was behind it.

The little bower was already occupied; a

man was seated by the brink of the pool, under the shade of the trees, bathing his feet, as Dorothea of yore might have done, in the cool water. His appearance was that of a toil-worn traveller; his dress, though decent, being defiled with dust and travel; his hair was in considerable disorder, and his face wan and weary. He seemed to sit there, inhaling the sweet breeze that gently wafted up the valley, and refreshing himself with the delicious coolness.

From time to time he dipped his hand into the water, and threw the drops over his face; then he lifted up his countenance again, and gazed into the deep blue heavens, and, as he did so, something wild, vehement, inspired, almost unearthly, might be seen to flit over it.

There was that about the wayfarer, which at once struck the imagination of the boy; and without coming forward to discover himself, he stood there watching the proceedings of the person who had struck and interested him so much.

Presently, the man once more raising his pale face, with a passionate gesture of adoration to the sky, slowly and solemnly began to sing a psalm. A slow and solemn chant indeed it was, breaking through the almost awful silence of that lonely place; and these were the words with which it began:

"Through all the varying scenes of life,
In trouble or in joy,
The praises of my God shall still,
My heart and tongue employ.
Of His delivrance I will boast,
Till all that are distrest,
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest."

Slow, solemn, simple, the notes rolled forth, every syllable distinctly articulated. He sang with a loud, powerful voice, filling the valley with his song, for he thought himself quite alone. The sounds—though born in a Christian land—the voice of sacred melody—was new to Charlie. He might have heard psalm-

singing, it is true, when at no great distance from a church, where service was going on, or the voice of some congregation or other, collected for field-preaching among the hills; but that was all, these things had only come to him with a vague sense of beautiful sound.

This was the first time that his mind had been awakened to the perception of a meaning in music; and certainly the first time that such a thing as religious verses, which he could listen to, and, in a measure, understand, had reached him.

The man still sang on, keeping his face lifted up towards the sky, with a sort of passionate fervour. When he had finished the first verse, he paused; it was almost as if he intended, that the meaning might sink deeper into the young listener's heart.

Charlie's memory was retentive; it had seized upon the lines, and he was devouring them in silent wonder. God! that *name*, at least, was not new to him. He had heard it invoked often enough, however, irreverently; and he had

a confused remembrance of his infant prayers; and he had found, even among the godless savages with whom he lived, some vague ideas of a God, the Creator. It was a subject upon which his thoughts had often been engaged, endeavouring to pierce the mystery that surrounded him.

"The praises of my God—
Of His deliverance I will boast—
From my example comfort take."

The man paused after this, as I said, as if in meditation. Presently, he struck up again; the strain was louder, even more passionate, than before; and the surrounding hills rang with it.

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me!
With me exalt His name.
When in distress to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.

"Their drooping hearts were soon refreshed
Who looked to Him for aid;
Descried success in every place;
A cheerful air displayed."

The boy crept nearer and nearer, with stealthy pace, his ear drinking in the sounds, fearful to lose a syllable of that which seemed directed to his very heart.

The pale face of the singer; his look and attitude of adoring ecstacy; the clear blue vault above; the deep solitude around; the hoar alders bending over the clear pool; the sweet, cool air; there was a spirit abroad pervading it all. Once more—once more—again the rich, clear voice is lifted up and rolls forth the pregnant verse once more:

> "Oh, make but trial of His love!
> Experience will decide
> How blest are they, and only they,
> Who in His truth confide."

It ceased: the man remained sitting upon the grass in silence, still gazing upwards, in an attitude of adoration.

The boy had crept nearer and nearer, till at last he unintentionally rustled the branches,

and the man turned his head and perceived him.

Charlie was about to retreat; but the traveller, after exclaiming rather hastily, "Who are you?" added so courteously, "Don't go away," upon seeing the face of the intruder, that Charlie came towards him without hesitation.

"What brought you here, young man?" said the stranger, kindly, as he approached. "I thought I had this little nook to myself. I believed no one else knew of this quiet pool and the little shy water-hen. What brought you here?"

"You were singing; and I loved to hear you."

"I believe it has pleased the Lord to bestow upon me a somewhat harmonious voice," replied the man. "I have been told so. Be it, and all things employed in His service," bending his head with reverence.

"The singing was very beautiful to me; but the singing was not all—not nearly all; the words!—the words!" faltered out the youth,

"they came upon me strangely. I have been fearfully in want of words like these; they come to me when I needed them."

"They are good words, and true words; and who, more than I, have cause to say so. Sit down by me, young man; this grass is soft and pleasant, and the little pool transparent and cool; these embowering trees are like the pleasant garden of the Lord. Oh, the refreshings He sends us here are great! Could God spread a table in the wilderness? Doubtless; and who knows it better than the wretch before you. 'He maketh the water-springs to flow in the wilderness, and sendeth refreshment to the dried land!' To the hardest heart, the most seared and desperate, God sends forth His voice, and that a strong voice; not loud and terrible, but strong and piercing, like a sharp sword, dividing the bones and the marrow; yet powerful to heal—powerful to heal. Oh, there is balm in Gilead, powerful to heal!"

"The God of whom you speak I feel *is*,"

replied the youth; "but He has not shown Himself to me. I know Him not. No one has told me of Him. Tell me who He is, and where He is to be found."

The man answered not, but fixed his eyes upon the youth's face with a deep, earnest gaze, and then he sighed deeply and said:

"Poor lost ones! poor lost ones! And what am I, that I should be as a brand snatched from the burning, when so many—oh!" and he groaned in spirit, then he slowly waved his head from side to side, as if pondering some deep mystery, and he said: "It is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

And that assurance seemed to comfort him in a manner; for he was one of those who could not without agony, contemplate the fearful doom, to which so many blinded ones among his fellow-creatures were hastening. That thought haunted him night and day. It was his terrible, fixed idea.

"Perish!" said Charlie; "perish from what? We must all die?"

"Ay, apparently all — all die;" repeated the man; "but what is that? die once! Nothing. To die ever; *for ever*. The living death, the second death, oh, that is fearful! The second death, young man, that is what we should flee from. Fear not those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; fear *Him* who, after He hath killed, can cast both soul and body into hell. Yea, I say unto you, fear Him."

"Your words are very grand; they seem to tell me of great things; after we are killed, you say. Then it is not true, as Hesther says, that when I have laid the clods over her, there will be an end of her."

The answer to this was another deep groan. Then—

"And in a Christian country too!" and raising his appealing face to heaven: "How long, oh Lord! how long?"

There was after this a short silence, during

which the man kept his eyes pensively fixed upon the turf; whilst those of the youth were fastened upon his face, perusing the wan, wasted, fervent features. Over them it was plain the storms of intense grief and passion had at one time passed; for their vestiges were too deep to be effaced by time.

At length lifting up his eyes, which were now full of a melancholy compassion, mingled with doubt and perplexity, he said:

"The face is beautiful, the eye clear and pure, sin and folly have not dishonoured the image of the Creator there impressed. Whence do you come? Who are you? How have you been reared, that you should unite this horrible ignorance of your God, with a semblance of so much truth and purity."

"*That*, I do not know. I have been bred among the gipsies, but I am not of their race; I have been among them ever since I can remember, I should say; but there is a sort of a dim vision of other things haunting me. Hesther says, it is all nonsense, and that

it is a remembrance of fairy-land, and that I come from fairy-land. As a child I believed this, as a youth it will no longer satisfy me. I see no traces around me of those beings they call fairies; but when they talk, as some of them do, of God, I think I do see His traces, but I know Him not, and I want to know Him."

"And what! has no one come near you these long number of years — how many? fifteen!—who could tell you of such things?"

"I have lived among my own people. It is not our custom to associate much with the rest of the world. Some of our men do, as horse-jockeys, tinkers, cattle leeches. Some of our women as sellers of philtres and fortune-tellers; but Hesther never did any of these things. I loved not such dealings, nor those with whom such dealings would have made me acquainted; and besides Hesther was so wretched when I left her, that I could not bear to leave her."

"And you have never been within a church? No—that of course; but have you never heard

the word of God preached by those, who struck with horror at the dreadful destitution in which poor wretches, such as you speak of, are left, go forth and endeavour to lift up a voice in the wilderness?"

"I do not understand you. Field-preachers, perhaps you mean; I have heard our people speak of such, but I never chanced to hear any. The people I am with, scoff at these things."

"But *you* have never scoffed."

"No, I feared to scoff—I hated to scoff—to scoff at the deep dark mystery around me, seemed too horrible a thing. I thought it like a brute to live in indifference to the great thought, I seemed to feel differently from the rest. This thought pressed in upon my mind; it was a weight, a burden, yet which I could not shake off, and would not have done if I could, there was a hope, a sort of foreshadowing of what was to be in my mind, that told me it would not always remain thus with me; for thus, it had assuredly not always been. Sir, there lies among my thoughts a vision of a fair

angel clothed in white, with long flowing curls of golden hair, and with dark blue eyes, beautiful as that sky above us. I am kneeling upon her knee, and my two hands are clasped in hers. And I remember still how the words she taught me to say began: 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' It is in vain that Hesther endeavours to persuade me that all this is mere fancy. None of my fellows have such fancies."

"Wonderful! wonderful! Thy ways are in the great deep, and thy pathways in the wide waters. Mysterious are thy doings, oh Lord! and that my soul knoweth right well."

"Sir!"

"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Leave thy fatherless children, I will provide for them."

"Sir! I don't understand—"

"No, no; you do not, and yet you do. You said that you had perceived Him though He was hidden; had caught a glimpse of the skirts of His glory, even though He had passed by."

"I do not know what your words exactly mean; yet they have a strange power over me. Sir! I am a poor, lost ignorant youth. Would you be pleased to speak so that I could understand you?"

"I do wrong; I do greatly wrong to indulge in this vein. Yes, young man, I will speak plain; I will open to you tidings of exceeding joy."

And as Philip opened the Gospel to the eunuch, so this man now opened his mouth, and in simple sentences preached the everlasting Gospel to the breathless, awe-struck, soul-entranced listener.

I despair of making any one believe it. It requires much reflection, much exercise of that valuable gift of imagination, which enables us to fling ourselves as it were, into the place of others, to realise what those glad tidings really proved to a soul in this state.

Not a gross, animalised, brutish soul, to whom if these tidings come at all, they come but with a much-impaired force; but to a

mind like the one before us, which nature had gifted with the highest faculties of perception, reflection, reasoning and imagination, and which had long lived in a labyrinth of perplexed and darkened thoughts.

Whence came he? He was answered. Whither was he bound? He was answered. Whence sprang this beautiful form of nature around him, of whose loveliness he had such an exquisite sense and enjoyment? And wherefore and whither—wherefore this, whither tending? —All answered.

The replies given to these questions by the simple Christian, who was now engaged in disclosing his treasure of hope and confidence to the eager listener, were all-sufficient for him. To his simple understanding and unsophisticated views of things, what he was told, harmonized so perfectly with what he had felt and seen, that it came at once upon his soul with the force of unquestionable truth.

And oh! how mighty was the change effected! A new birth, indeed! Springing

into a new world of existence—as completely new as when the babe first springs into this world's life.

Everything around him was changed—every relation and perception altered; for the very element in which all these things existed was no longer the same. Moral life, spiritual life, life renewed after death—interminable. Existences unseen, but present, and to a certain degree within perception—glorious, benevolent, protective, good! A course to be pursued; an obedience to be rendered; time to be accounted for; the great and the good to be done.

His mind seemed overwhelmed with the rush of new ideas. He could scarcely breathe. He was almost as one dead. He grew pale with emotion; his heart stood still as he listened. As the curtain rose, and the glorious visions were disclosed, they seemed too bright for mortal sense. His brain reeled under them. His young mind, nurtured by the impressions of the great nature around him, found neither doubt nor difficulty. The answer to all his

questions was given; the object of all his searchings found; the dumb yearning of his inner life satisfied. All was complete, all harmonious, all, to his naturally clear understanding, logical.

To doubt that the great problem was resolved, the true answer given, would have appeared to him the wildest absurdity. He felt as intuitive a perception that he held the true exposition of the great question, as if the inevitable solution of a mathematical problem had been expounded to him.

CHAPTER XV.

"Do not leave me—do not leave us! Come to the tents of my poor gipsy brethren, and tell them what you have been telling me. Oh! you cannot guess how greatly—greatly we are all in want of a teacher like you!"

"I cannot come;" and as the man spoke thus, he turned suddenly pale, and painful recollections seemed to disturb him. "No, no, I cannot come with you: my call lies other ways. And yet—" checking himself—"wherefore say I this? Am I not devoted? Is not my vow, to go wherever I am most wanted? And yet, I greatly fear, young man, if I did

come, those rude men of whom you speak would deride and scoff at me—perhaps misuse one like *me*, who presumed to speak the words of everlasting life. I—I—what am I, that I should be sufficient to do the Lord's work among *them ?*"

"Come and tell them what you have told me."

The man seemed to hesitate.

"You will not leave us in this manner?" urged Charlie. "What is to become of me, if you go away and leave me? With these new thoughts just put into my mind, and nothing to strengthen them, already a thousand questions seem struggling for words, impatient for an answer."

"You shall have that which will answer them all."

He drew forth sundry books out of the little wallet that lay upon the grass by his side, and selecting a Testament bound in the cheapest and commonest manner, presented it to him.

"This," he said, "will make you wise unto salvation."

"But ah! I cannot read."

"Not read!"

"No! Pages of printed books are all darkness to me."

"Then how have you learned to think and to speak as you do?"

"I don't know. Some words please me, and I use them; some displease me, and I do not use them. The woman who stands to me in the place of a mother has a lofty utterance at times. I learn from her."

"You would like to learn to read?"

"If books have in them such things as you have told me, yes; but I have not wanted books."

"Listen, and you shall hear how books speak."

And he took the book, and opening at the Gospel of St. John, read the discourse of the evening before the Crucifixion.

"Teach me to read! Give me that book!"

"You will soon learn—let us begin now. See, the sun has not yet sunk behind the mountain-top. It will be at least two hours before the long shadows cover the valley. Sit down by me, and let us begin."

You will not suppose they began in the usual spelling-book manner. Subtle, intelligent, fresh and strong as were the powers of the pupil, in two hours' time even much was done.

A fresh world of wonders burst upon Charlie.

I scarcely know a more delightful, intellectual pleasure than that which we feel at the moment when written characters upon which we have long pored, discerning in them nothing but ugly and confused dots and lines, suddenly become instinct with life and intelligence. Of all the magics and magnetisms, I know, or ever heard of, nothing seems to me more wonderful than this, and the more I think of the miraculous connection between the written word without and the living word within, the more wonderful it appears to me.

The sun had now long set behind the hills, and the shadows fell heavy upon the narrow valley, the little pool and the alders; but the twilight was soft and clear, and a few stars began to glimmer in the heavens, as the book was closed, and the traveller rising from his seat, began to adjust his wallet, as if about to depart.

The youth stood beside him whilst he was thus occupied, musing deeply. Deep thought and deep melancholy were upon his face.

"Farewell!" said the traveller, reaching out his hand, "when shall we meet again for another lesson?"

"You are not going away!" cried Charlie, again starting from his reverie. "You cannot go away and leave us all. You will stay with us a little time—you will tell these poor, poor creatures what you have told me. Oh, you cannot think how much they need it!"

"Not now—my path leads another way. Young man, you do not speak to one pursuing a chosen course, but driven forwards whether

he will or not. I do not go where I wish, but where I must; for if I do this thing willingly it is well, but if not woe is me."

The youth looked at him as if he did not understand—as if he waited for more.

"Shall I tell him? Must I tell *him* too?" the man exclaimed passionately: is there no one—no one—from whom I may hide the dreadful tale! Oh, wretch, wretch!" he burst forth with great agony, "and is it still so—ever so—base wretch, will you refuse to tell what the Lord hath done for you? Refuse! that you may save this poor shame-seared cheek a few hot blushes! You think me a good man, I dare say, child," he said, suddenly turning round, and almost fiercely addressing him. "You deceive yourself! There is not walking upon this earth a blacker criminal than I am."

The young man started back he turned white—he looked dreadfully shocked and disappointed.

"You thought because you found me singing

psalms here by myself;" continued the other bitterly, "that I was even such a one as you are—one of the pure lambs of Christ's own flock; of which indeed you have ever been. Not yet called indeed, but ready—ready—when the Master's voice was heard. But I! what was I? Oh, one of his lambs!—one of his lambs! But it was that one, the gracious Master went to seek when it was lost—lost—lost in the wilderness. It *was* lost and is found. And therefore—therefore!" he cried, his wasted cheek flashing with a sudden fire, and his eye lighting with a wild enthusiasm; "and therefore I will proclaim His glory and my shame—my shame! Yes, yes—but not now—not now—another time. I could not do it now."

And his voice and attitude sunk again to despondency. After a little time he seemed to recover himself, and he went on thus: "This is it: your people—yours is the tribe there, is it not?—your people are too much accustomed to walk in the dark paths, not to know

most of those who have been there also. I would not have them know me again. Perhaps some of them might know me. No, no—better not, better not. You, I will tell; you shall learn all. My soul is knit to thee as David's was to Jonathan. I would have thy love and thy honour—be thy revered teacher in Christ—this is what I would fain be—but no, no—I will not be a hypocrite even for this. It is bitter, but bitter or not, it shall be done.

"Child — child—who knows?" and again a sudden flash of exultation gleamed in his eyes; and then it faded away into the deepest gloom, as he said—"No, no, no—what is done cannot be undone." Then, with a fresh burst of enthusiasm: "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Thanks and praises and honours, to the Lamb for ever; our robes have been washed, and made white in His blood."

He kept gathering his things in a hasty, flurried manner, together as he went on

talking in this wild, fitful manner. When all was finished and he was ready to depart, he stooped down, scooped some of the water from the little pool, and bathed his temples and forehead. The paroxysm of his mind, which almost amounted to frenzy, seemed to have subsided, and taking the hand of the youth in his, he said more calmly:

"You understand, there are reasons why I had better not go with you; they might some of them know me, and if they did, my words would be worse than vain; they would sound like horrid mockery and blasphemy in their ears. Now I must pursue my journey where my call leads me, and that is to the county gaol. The prisoners there know my face well, some of them my history; I am a visible example to *them* of the power of God; they recognise it in me, for they know all. Your people, if they chanced to know part, would not believe the rest. It is you, not I, who must go among them. Come again here to-morrow. You must learn to read. I shall

stay in these parts a few weeks, in order to teach you. Then you may go forth, a worthy messenger of God, and bear His holy tidings to these poor wretches, to whose horrible situation you have been wonderfully awakened."

Perplexity and doubt were in the young man's eyes; he seemed scarcely to be able to take in all that was said, yet his countenance kindled. He had so deplored the fate of those around him, had been awakened to so strong a perception of their wants and their misery, that the idea of going among them to help and enlighten, bearing the joyful tidings he had just learned, seemed to his heart a joy too big to be contained.

The new perceptions with which his soul was filled, and which seemed to come so home to his spirit, admirably as his nature was calculated to receive them, these enlarged prospects, these noble hopes, these glorious Presences, he longed to impart the great tidings to his poor lost fellows of the

wilds, as yet being happily ignorant of that difference in their original temperaments, which might make what was so congenial to his nature, a strange and antagonistic element to theirs.

"Farewell, again," said the man, extending his hand, and in act to depart.

But Charlie still held him fast, detaining his hand and looking wistfully into his face.

"To the gaol! Did I not hear you say you were going to the county gaol?"

"Yes; that is my first station."

"I have a friend there. He is committed for housebreaking; and, there was a death—there was murder—"

The hand which he held, began violently to twitch and tremble as the horrid word was uttered. The stranger grew pale, with that paleness which a sudden sickness at the heart produces.

"Let me go, let me go," he said, angrily; "why do you keep me here longer? Let me

go! What do you mean by using that hideous word? Oh, oh! the worm that never dieth; the fire that never can be quenched! It comes again, it comes again! yet there *is* peace. Well, well, your friend has committed a murder, has he?" with a strange bitter tone; "and who can you send to him better than I? who better? who better?"

"No, no; he did not commit the murder. Poor fellow! he would not hurt a fly—great, big, rough Ben, rough as he is, he wouldn't hurt a fly; but he got mixed up with a fearful gang, all through a woman. He is guilty of housebreaking, and he is suspected of the murder. He lies there, poor fellow, surrounded by wretches, worse than ever he was, though they may not have committed felonies punishable with death. There they are, young and old, scoffing and swearing, and blaspheming, and talking; oh! it makes the hair of the head stand on end to hear them; and the poor, fellow, Sir, he looks, and he is, more like an innocent stupid bull calf,

who unwittingly has knocked down and hurt somebody, never thinking it was wrong; he is more like that than anything else. He's not as one of those scoffers round him, who know what they are at, and what they do. It would make your heart bleed, to see the poor fellow, looking like a big child, so surprised to find himself there; and still more to find himself a felon, a housebreaker, a thief, and a consort with murderers. He knows no more than a baby how it all came about; but the woman persuaded him. Sir, what a wretch is that woman! for he loves her so, he would lay his heart before her feet for her to trample upon, and would give his life willingly for her, any day."

"You want me to see and speak to this man. Do you guess why I am the properest of all men upon earth to go and preach to the murderer?"

The wildness of his eyes was returning.

"No, Sir; only that you seem to me ready to do good to any one; and, above all,

to preach to the lost ignorant; and this poor boy, this Big Ben, wants your help very much."

"He shall have it; yes, what help I can give—what help a wretch, once lost, like myself, can give."

His mind seemed still unsettled; he was aware of it himself; again he stooped down, and bathed his brows with the water. This seemed, as before, to compose him; he settled his wallet upon his shoulders, and then he promised Charlie that he would see his friend the next day; and the day following, would, towards the evening, be again at the spot where they were standing, and repeat the reading-lesson.

"You must learn to read, in the first place," he said, now speaking as quietly and rationally as any other man. "That is of indispensable necessity, before you can take upon yourself the task for which the Lord seems to have prepared you. His treasures are hidden in caskets of written words; and we must possess the key,

before we can minister these rich things. Come, again, then, to-morrow; and perhaps, perhaps — may I find help, as I mean rightly! perhaps I shall have the courage, sometime or other — well, well — good night, good night."

And again wringing the youth by the hand, he turned away, and slowly and meditatively, took his path in the direction which led towards the county town.

So they parted, and the boy turned home. It was now late, and as he emerged from the valley, and mounted the ascent above, the wild expanse of open downs and hills stretched upon every side around him, like the breadth of the ocean; all sleeping tranquilly in the bathing light, for the night was preternaturally clear, and the heavens were all alive, spangled with stars, which seemed big as so many suns.

Right before him, as he ascended the bank, and looked southwards, was the splendid constellation of Orion, with its glittering lumi-

naries, a planet or twinkling sun on every side. Glorious spectacle!

Filled with his new ideas, the youth gazed upwards, awe-struck; his soul was swelling. That wide-spread vault above, alive with eyes; the sleeping world beneath, hill beyond hill, softening in the dusky twilight! Had his mind been imbued with poetic reading, the outpouring of his spirit might have found words, and he could have exclaimed:

"But, oh! thou mighty Mind, whose powerful word
Said, thus let all things be, and thus they were—
Where shall I seek Thy presence? How unblamed
Invoke Thy dread perfection?
Have the broad eyelids of the morn beheld thee?
Or does the beamy shoulder of Orion support Thy throne?"

And then, as his heart melted and trembled at the deep sense of the reality of the great mystery of the awful Being, whose majesty is, in the immensity of the star-clad heavens

disclosed even but faintly, he might have added:

"Oh! look with pity down on erring, guilty man—
Not in Thy robes of terror clad—
Not with those lightnings armed which guilty Sinai felt,
When fear appalled the scattered tribes—
Thou hast a gentler voice, which whispers comfort to the swelling heart;
Abashed, yet longing to behold her Maker!"

The fires were extinguished, the encampment wrapped in profound repose, when Charlie entered it. There they lay, the rude huts scattered about, under the tall elm trees, which lifted their huge heads towards the star-besprinkled sky. A dog raising his head suddenly with a sharp cry, and laying it down again with a little comfortable grumble upon perceiving who it was, alone saluted him. He reached the tent of his foster-mother, which stood apart from the rest, hoping to find her asleep, but she was still watching for him. She was sitting upon the

ground, with her back to the tent door, her eyes fixed upon the planet Jupiter, which was shining full upon her.

"You are very late, Charlie," she began, lifting up her head and looking at him, but not otherwise changing her attitude. "Where have you been all this time? At the gaol? It is well to remember friends in adversity; but there is a time for all things, and a time to remember friends at home."

"I have not been to the gaol. This is not a day when I could be admitted."

"Then where have you been, to keep away so late? It is not well, Charlie. Hesther sits alone, looking at that pure star, till its whiteness seems to burn into her soul; not to make it white too, but to show how hideous its blackness and deformity is. Hesther's mind is waning, Charlie; it flares up and down like a lamp quivering in its socket, and the oil is exhausting fast away. You should not leave

me so long now, boy, for my heart is weary, weary. Sometimes when you do not come back at your time, I think you will never come back at all, and then! You should not give Hesther that pain. She has borne much; but that thought, oh, it is the death agony! You should not do it, Charlie."

He had sat down by her whilst she was pouring out this sort of lament, in a wild, half-musical kind of tone, and her thin hand, almost black, so completely was it withered, was held kindly in his, as in a soothing manner he began:

"Mammy must not be sorry that I staid late this time, and she should not vex herself. Have I not promised that I will never, never leave her? Let that comfort her. You must not vex yourself, my mammy, if henceforward I am oftener away; for I am no more a boy, and I must be up and doing."

"A boy! no; no longer a boy!" said she, turning to him, and fondly stroking down his beautiful hair. "No; the little angel-boy is

become a man. He cannot stay here long; it is not possible. The butterfly is bursting, *has* burst its case. But only let me die first, only let me die first! Tell me where you have been," she said, changing her tone suddenly.

"I have been over the hills on *that* side, and down into one of the deep valleys, where I never was before, and there I met with a man—a traveller—and I have spent the time with him."

"A man! a traveller! One upon the road? One of our own people?"

"Not one of our own people."

"And how came you to get into talk with him? They are bad, bad, bad, those Gorgios. You are best kept to yourself, and to your own clan."

"No, mammy, that is not so. I am no longer best kept to myself; and, from my own clan, I learn nothing. I found this man dressed in a simple garb, not such as the Gorgios you despise wear, much such as one of ours might

have on. He had a wallet by his side, and he sat by the brink of a little solitary pool, all alone, singing."

"Singing! What should he be singing? Some foolish song or other, better not listened to."

"Songs of thanks to Him above, who made him, and you, and me, and all of us, and who hears us *all*."

"Stuff! A wandering parson — a gospel engro. What good could he do you?"

"Much: he told me of great things, which, when you will hear, I will tell you."

"Tell me! tell me! waste of time to tell me," shaking her head. "And what other fine things did he tell you?"

"He gave me this, and he told me I must read it. I am to learn to read it."

"A book! — let me look at it; let me touch it. And he will teach you to read! Ah! I see it, I see it—I read it, I read it. The hour is coming; it will soon, soon be here. I *shall* be dead first! I *shall* be dead

first! I *will* be dead first! for lose him—I cannot —cannot do it. Teach you to read, says he? Make a clerk of thee! Ay, to be sure—to be sure. It is all right—all right! Yes," turning to him her large fevered eyes, and gazing upon him fervently; "yes, to be sure. He shall not go up into the lordly chambers ashamed; he must not do that. When the time comes, they will suppose him to be a poor, ignorant, brutified boy—a beast! a wild beast! Not so. Oh! the free air and the wild hills have not nourished him so; but ignorant! ignorant! None of their fine letter learning, that they think so much of; none of that at least. Ha! ha! but he shall have learned to read.

"It is well," she ended this outburst with saying; "the man will teach you to read, you say: go to him and learn. Learn well, and learn fast; for the thread of Hesther's life is well-nigh spun; and when *that* is ended, you must hear of something. Yes, when that is over," pressing her hand to her bosom, where the little glove in its satchel hung sus-

pended, "we must undraw curtains, and reveal secrets, and—oh! that I could live to see the end. But they would take him away from me."

END OF VOL. II.

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CASTLE AVON.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "RAVENSCLIFFE,"

&c., &c.

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CASTLE AVON.

CHAPTER I.

THE next day but one, and every successive day for a considerable time, did Claribert walk early in the morning to the little pool, and there, beneath the fringed alders, he pursued with undiminished ardour the education thus singularly begun.

The traveller, who gave his name as Charles, and who would give no other name, devoted four hours of every day to his instruction; but so soon as the sun, his only clock, had reached a certain point in the heavens, he regularly

departed, and employed the rest of the day by himself.

His assiduity in teaching, during the time he was so employed, was unabated; and either it was that he possessed the art of instruction to an extraordinary degree, or that he had a most extraordinary gifted pupil to instruct, but the progress made was astonishing, and would in particular have astonished any one who has attempted the task of endeavouring to initiate an adult labourer into the mysteries of letters.

The youth's perceptions were so clear and healthy, so apt and happy in receiving impressions, that the mere act of learning to read was accomplished in a time wonderfully short; and no sooner was he capable of mastering the treasures of wisdom, of fancy, poetry, and history collected in the pages of the Old Testament, than his intellects expanded with the same rapidity, that his moral being had done under the light of life from the New.

Many other books he had not, though a few, Charles from time to time supplied; but there was abundance of food for his intellect, and for his heart in these two rich volumes. And the

culture thus afforded, was as remarkable for its clearness as for its simplicity; for the vividness of the pictures presented to the imagination, as for the free healthy tone of thought, and the rectitude of judgment, and correct habits of reasoning thus formed.

The mind unimpeded by a confusion of unconnected, overcharged ideas, arising from ill-defined knowledge, apprehended the objects presented with remarkable clearness and vivacity, and all the powers of this fine nature were called forth to spontaneous, healthy exercise; not clogged or confounded as many of our pupils are with the dull monotony of half-understood words—words which too often rather obscure, than give, a meaning. Each winged word was here as a bright intelligence to him, his teacher was but an ordinary, you might say, common-minded man. He, from these very precious books, drew forth but imperfect and often distorted images, for *his* mind had early been debased by a narrow and vicious culture. To Claribert they came, as we may suppose them coming to Adam and the early denizens of the yet free breathing, new created world; illustrated by the

teachings alone of the great nature around them.

Beautiful was the mind thus matured and expanded, and its extraordinary beauty and loveliness shone forth in a most remarkable countenance. I despair in words to give you an idea of the cloudless openness, the freedom from embarrassment or vain fears, the singleness of heart, the limpid purity of thought and feeling there displayed. The fair transparent water, in the body of whose clearness a whole world of beautiful creatures lying beneath is displayed, may give a faint image of what I mean to express.

Not so poor Charles. His face was wan and haggard, now lit up with passionate devotion and gratitude, now burning with a zeal that seemed to leave him no rest. Sometimes he seemed sinking into unutterable horrors at the idea of the dreadful doom prepared for the wicked; at others, in an

ecstasy of joy, he was singing forth psalms of deliverance!

The affection, gratitude and respect, which Claribert showed him, would on some days appear to afford him the highest gratification, and then he would pursue his instructions assiduously until the hour of parting came, and would go away in pursuit of his usual avocations tranquil and apparently happy; upon others, a word dropped by accident—a sentence in the book they were reading, would seem to stab him to the soul, he would start up with wild cries, declaring himself the most dreadful criminal that ever polluted God's earth, for whom there could be neither hope nor salvation, then casting himself with his face to the ground, would lie there groaning for hours.

Still the confession he at first seemed intending to make, was never made. He appeared to shudder at the idea, and long was the moment delayed. But one day they had been reading the Scriptures together for some time, he illustrating and explaining it with very able comments; for though entirely self-instructed, he had managed to gather together a vast

amount of curious learning. When they came upon the text, "Confess your sins to each other." This text, simple as it seemed, immediately produced one of his wild explosions.

He started up, clapped his hand upon his forehead, remained some considerable time in that attitude, then, with a heavy groan, saying:

"Yes; I must, I must. Give Thy servant grace to do Thy will," he reseated himself by the young man, and said: "Will you hear my history?"

Without waiting for an answer, as one who relates a story rather to satisfy some inner need, than to gratify the curiosity of his auditor, he thus began:

"I was born—it matters little where such a being as I was born, except that the places where one passed one's earliest childhood, I suppose exercise a sort of fatality over one's future life. I was born, then, in a close, narrow, obscure street of the borough of Southwark, and my father was by trade a pawnbroker.

I suppose you know what the business of a pawnbroker is, young man, little as you are acquainted with the life of cities. If you do not, you must be told, that it is a profession calculated to be of the greatest service to mankind; but, as it is too often carried on, proving their greatest bane. The power a poor wretch thus obtains in some hour of great necessity, to obtain from a certain portion of his little property, the supply of his pressing wants, is a great advantage, and tends to make these poor things anxious to accumulate little comforts about them which represent money, and for which they can always obtain money.

"But then a pawnbroker should be a compassionate, a righteous man, not ready to grind the face of the poor, and take advantage of their necessities. He should, moreover, be a conscientious man, and not lend money upon a pledge, which he knows is about to be expended in the gin-shop, or abused to some wicked purpose or other.

"Things which my poor father was not.

"He was a hard-featured, hard-tempered man,

whose sole aim seemed to be to get money. Yet someway he never succeeded.

"He was always grinding and grudging, and exacting to the uttermost farthing, if the redemption of a pledge was overgone but a day; and many is the poor creature I have seen, begging and praying that he would remit the forfeiture and take the money; but he never would, though it might be the bed she lay on. They used to call my father an old Jew. Jew or not I cannot say, but certain it is, not one syllable of Christian prayer, was ever heard in that house from year's end to year's end.

"We were four of us: my father and mother, a brother and myself. My poor mother I do not remember much about: she fell down stairs when I was very young, and was killed. I just remember the time, and what a dreadful sort of horror it threw upon those dark, narrow, winding stairs, which I had never crept up without fear of falling, and which were now more terrible than ever.

"Strange things too were whispered about,

and I heard the mutterings of people —they should take better care what they say before children. Some said the poor thing put an end to herself; others, that my father pushed her down in a fit of passion. How it was I do not know. All I remember of the poor creature is, a rather pretty, slender, gentle-looking woman, dressed in the dirtiest and shabbiest manner, with an old cap with a flower, or some bit of finery or other in it, falling half off her head.

"She moved about as if she was not quite herself; and whenever father's back was turned, too truly, she was sure to send one or other of us to the gin-shop, for a penny glass. She would often give brother a sip for fetching it; but I hated the liquid fire, and would not taste it.

"When she was more drunk, perhaps, than usual, and father after having been out some time, as he often was towards night, came back and found her in this condition, he would be in a dreadful rage. Terrible was it for us to see and hear. And whether he ended her misery at last by pushing her

down stairs, I don't know; but after that, it is certain he looked more hard and terrible than he had ever done before; so that we two little boys trembled if he but cast an eye upon us."

The man stopped here, to take breath as it were. The recollection of his childhood seemed too fearful to be endured. His haggard face assumed a more wan and pallid hue, and his eye looked wilder as he recalled it.

"We had an uncle, a strange sort of man, who used sometimes to come home with my father at nights. I never saw him by day. There are some men, like some animals, who seem formed to be denizens of night, and their aspect is sinister and unpleasant. Bats and owls and so on are of these—they don't look like the creatures of God. People put them in pictures with hags and witches, as if only fitted to consort with such.

"My uncle was one of these sort of looking beings. He seemed not fitted to mix with daylight-men. He had little dark blue eyes, looking about like a rat's, as if he were always

upon the watch, and doing things by stealth. Then he had a certain hard horror written upon his face, as if he was always about some deed of darkness, which he would not suffer to horrify him.

"Enough! enough! of the hideous shapes that thronged about my unredeemed infancy. No baptized child was I. I was a poor, miserable little wretch, knowing neither Father in Heaven nor father upon earth—for he, called my father, was none to me—getting along as I could: sometimes in holes and corners, sick and wretched; sometimes well, and in thoughtless spirits, playing about with other little vagabonds in the streets; and so that the sun shone, in my way, happy.

"This went on, I don't know how long. At last, one evening, my uncle came in sooner than usual; it was just after dark; and he sat down in the kitchen behind our shop, and rubbed his knees before the fire a little; and then he called me to him, and looked at my face, and stroked down my hair, saying as he did so: 'You're a smart-looking fellow enough

when you are cleaned up a bit. Should you like to go and be boy to a 'potecary?'

"'Yes!' I said; for I hated my home and everything belonging to it. What was there for any one to love? The blessing of God was not upon that place; the light of God's word had never beamed there, nor His peace been upon it. It was a den of misery and wickedness, extortion and cruelty. There be thousands such in most great cities. How long, O Lord! how long?

"And to think," he burst forth with energy, "that we live in a Christian land! and that heathens, and worse, far worse, than the most ignorant of heathens, are living close by our doors, and children are day after day gathering bodily growth we know not how; but never hearing one word, good or bad, to teach them right or wrong, or whence they come or whither they are going!" And he groaned aloud. "Such I was, such I was, for nine long years!

"Yet not altogether does the Lord leave Himself without a witness: even in this distress there is a faint shining, like a lighted ember in

a sea-coal fire, keeping up a glimmering of that which might be blown into a bright blaze. In my darkest hour there was a feeling of right and wrong. I knew I ought not to do wrong.

"But quite untutored, I was accustomed to yield to every childish temptation. I was a pilferer and a liar; I was everything that is bad, except cruel. I was not cruel. No, no! not naturally cruel!

"I don't mean to tell you all that passed during the next seven years that I lived with the apothecary. Part of them were usefully employed, or should have been so. My master's mother, who was a very good old lady, seeing how ignorant I was of the very name of my Saviour, took upon herself to teach me my Bible, and after a little while she sent me to the Sunday-school.

"I did not learn very much from my good old mistress, but she taught me to read and spell, and that is a grand thing where there is a Gospel to be read. No man can miss his way much who can read, and will read his Gospel.

But not much of Gospel truth did I learn at this time; for the good old lady, though the most excellent and pious Christian that could be, was irritable and cross, particularly with a heedless, stupid, senseless lad like me.

"She was a good, regular scold of the old school with children, and thought nothing was to be got out of them without harsh words and cuffs. Moreover, she was of a sour, austere countenance, very yellow and very wrinkled, and her snow-white cap, her stiff white kerchief, and her still stiffer black silk gown, which stood around her like a board, gave a something very unprepossessing to her appearance."

He paused, moved, then burst forth again:

"I was a child that was formed for other things. How I came by it I know not, but I had the most passionate love for everything that was fair, and sweet, and beautiful. The blue heaven, the sunshine, the trees and the flowers—when, sometimes, I was in the way of seeing them—soft and kind faces, gentle and sweet words, possessed a power over me that drove me almost beside myself with delight.

Some methods might have done anything with me; but in proportion as I loved the beautiful and the bright, so did I abhor the ugly, the dark, and the harsh. My soul loathed these things.

"Well, where was I? In spite of her angry ways, I rather loved my old mistress; there was something venerable about her, and I knew her to be a thoroughly good woman; and in the venerable, and the good there is always a something of the beautiful, and it was the beautiful that I doated upon.

"As for the Sunday-school, I hated it. Sunday! the bright day, the day of fresh air, enjoyment, and liberty! after having been shut up in a little nasty-smelling shop all the week. How I had enjoyed it, when first I went as boy to the apothecary!

"He used to send me to church in my turn, morning or evening. To church I never went; I spent the time getting as far as I possibly could from my dwelling, in any direction, I cared not which; sometimes to Westminster Bridge, to watch the flowing river and the boats and ships, and gaze upon the lordly buildings,

and the gardens, and green grass-plots of Whitehall; sometimes right out into the country. Sometimes I could, with great diligence, get even as far as the parks.

"I don't know that these walks did me any particular good. I cannot recollect that my thoughts were ever much employed upon any subject; gazing and enjoying the fresh air—that was enough for me. Yet they seemed, too, to have a sort of purifying effect. I used to feel, as it were, a lighter, and a better boy, when I came in. I never troubled myself about it being wrong to deceive my master, and not go to church. I had not grace enough in me at that time even to think about it. All I cared for was being undiscovered.

"But what a change when I was sent to the Sunday school! Oh, how I abhorred that Sunday school! To leave the close, stinking shop, and instead of the sweet, fresh air, to exchange for the close, and still more stinking school-room! The school-house was up a little dirty, back-alley behind the church, where not a single sunbeam ever penetrated except in the

very middle of summer. Thither we went at eight o'clock in the morning, and staid there till church-time. After church, home for one half-hour to dinner, and then to school again till church-time. After that, school again. Oh, the sweet sabbath rest! Poor little wretches! it was not for us. Then we used to stand in rows, hammering out one thing after another; sick and wearied to death, and so longing for a bit of play. Then the dreadful long service, which seemed as if it would never come to an end—and the sermon, which was to me a mere string of words, utterly devoid of meaning; I could sometimes have gnawed my hands with impatience, I longed so to be free.

"But stop, stop; where am I running to?

"These Sunday-schools are meant for the best—might do good, I dare say *do*—much good; but many of them are not well regulated. Sufficient thought is not given to the happiness of the children, upon this their day of rest and recreation. I am speaking of those, like me—*working* children. Certainly the school I went to, did little or no good for me. If the time taken up

had been only half as long, it might have done much. Vague, undefined ideas of Gospel truth, I got. I learned that there was a God above us, and a Redeemer; but as to any practical effect —as to any realising of these things—there was not the slightest produced upon me. I lived on, just as great a heathen as I had ever been; nothing reached my heart.

"Ah! 'His paths are in the deep waters, and His ways past finding out!' It has pleased Him to lead me through the depths—the darkest depths — but not for ever! The poor strayed sheep should not be lost for ever!

"Young man, it is of His mercies I would speak to you, and I am coming now to the fearful part of my history, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,' and my heart of flesh shrinks from the task.

"It is so dreadful to remember it all!

"I was a thinking, calculating child. My

mind was strenuous in pursuit of an object—it wanted but to be rightly-directed. I hated my present mode of existence, now my Sundays were taken away, and I cast about and thought how to help myself—and throw off this insupportable yoke, which the power of others had laid upon me.

"I began to consider, how power was to be acquired in this world. The power from above —that power which is about our ways and around our bed, and spieth out all our paths —I never thought of applying to. There was only one power that presented itself to my mind, as the power before which everything must yield, and that was—the power of money.

"I resolved to get money. I grew hungry, insatiable for money. How I came by it I cared not, so that I might but get it. It appeared to me the true help to unlock my prison-bars, to open to me all the enjoyments of the world. Covetousness took possession of my soul. I had chosen my god — a bare idol before whom I fell down and worshipped! 'Ye

cannot serve God and Mammon.' I chose Mammon.

"That is how it is with most—perhaps with all. So it will be with you, young man, sooner or later. You will have to choose between God and Mammon. Oh! trample upon the desire of riches! — abhor covetousness! — despise riches! Seek God. Stand fast by God—in good report, in evil report—in sorrow and in joy —when He afflicts, or when He sustains! Stand fast by God!

"When this passion had taken possession of my soul, the little light that was within me seemed to go out; and for many years I lived quite abandoned to myself. They were years of darkness—utter darkness! Any way of getting money was alike to me. Sometimes I pilfered a little from the medicines, such as opium, the warmer cordials, and bitters, which I retailed to poor, nervous women, as drams. Sometimes, it was my time I stole, staying out in my rounds, to visit certain private patients of my own.

"At last, when I was about seventeen, I be-

came initiated into my uncle's horrid trade, which was that of a body-snatcher; and after a patient had been conveyed to the grave, would not only point out the place, but assist in carrying away the body. These midnight occupations completed the work, which other evil habits might still have left undone, and brutalized the little that was left of tolerably good within me.

"It is not so much the wrong that is done, by thus violating the holy sanctuary of the dead, as the attendant circumstances which render this occupation so destructive to the soul. The time of night—the means used—the desecration of all, men naturally regard as sacred * * I know not what of disgusting, degrading * * Oh! it is dreadful! dreadful to think of the effect it produced upon me.

"Horrid things these, young man; you wild denizens of nature have much to learn of the life of great cities—have you not? But

patience; you shall hear still more, you shal hear what all this brought me to at last.

"At this time, you must understand, that in one way or other I had picked up a smattering of physic, and could guess and blunder almost as well as my master.

"I am a wretched skeleton now, a brand snatched from the burning, bearing all the marks of the fire upon it, blackened, and almost without form; so fiercely hath the flame dealt with me! At that time, in spite of my evil habits, and inclinations, I was rather a fair, good-looking youth; and the poor people, especially the women, were glad when it was my turn to visit them professionally.

"I had an eye to supplanting my master in his practice, and to setting up at no very distant time for myself; I only waited till I could save money enough. In the meantime I was not a mere hoarder, I knew how to lay out my money when I could do it to advantage.

"So I dressed tolerably well; moreover, was very profuse of my flattering words to poor women, and of my smiles and caresses the children, and, poor good souls, they would

so pleased with my agreeable ways—for my master was sharp, short, and rough. And they were so especially delighted when I came to see their children.

"It was not all pure self-interest either. I used to get, in a certain way, fond of many of these little things. Poor wretches, as they mostly were, yet some of them would be like angels, so innocent, and so beautiful!

"Yes, yes, yes, believe me or not, who will—they, some of them, shone forth like angels, even in the midst of all that filth, degradation, and wretchedness—they did."

He paused to take breath; his face turned more livid; his eyes had a more dark, and gloomy fire.

"It's coming now, it's coming," and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, he went on.

"One night, I had just come in, when I found my uncle seated by the vast kitchen fire waiting for me.

"'I came to have a talk with you, Charles; shut the door, and sit down here by me.'

"There was something between importance and solemnity in his way of speaking, mixed with

a hidden look of joy and exultation—he went on, speaking in a low voice:

"'There's a famous job offered to me, and if you'll help me to do it, you and I'll go halves; and what do you think the reward is to be? Just a neat two hundred pounds, my lad. So one hundred shall be yours, if you'll just find the needful.'

"One hundred pounds!

"I remember it now, how my heart stood still, then gave a sudden bound.

"One hundred pounds all at once!

"If the evil one had asked me to sell my soul for one hundred pounds down, do you think I should not have jumped at the bargain?

"'What am I to do for it? Anything you will; only name it,' said I, sitting down by him.

"'That's my lad! Listen to me. You go a deal among women and children practising, doesn't you?' he said. 'Well, reckon up the little ones under four year old, you may chance to have upon your sick list, and see if there chance to be a little golden haired, plump boy, whose locks some foolish mother has not been a

cutting. And if he be dead of his sickness by to-morrow afternoon, why there's a hundred pounds for you, and another, or as much more as I please to ask, for me.'

"I understood him well enough; but he had never before, throughout the whole of our transactions, proposed anything so wicked as murder. Many of his horrid calling have, and do, I believe, perpetrate such things; but my uncle had never hinted at such a crime upon any occasion, and I do not believe he intended it even now.

"'Think over 'em all,' he said, seeing I did not speak, 'because as how I'd liefer you had the hundred pounds than any one else—so if you chance to have the right stuff about, pray do. If you can't, I must go elsewhere; for somewhere in this big town, I must find what's wanted, and that is, a fair child of under four years of age, with long yellow hair—and that afore to-morrow night; which is all the time I've got to make the search.'

"I was still silent.

"Young man, the adversary was busy with me; and, as there I sat thinking, up rose the

image of the very child—just exactly what he described, at this very time lying sick not many streets off, in a little close court, out of everybody's way, and one of ten children belonging to a bricklayer's labourer, who had been dead some two months back.

"The child was ill, and in his bed.

"'Well,' said my uncle, 'you're in a brown study, quite; but I have no time to lose—what say you? Do you know such an one, or do you not know such an one?'

"'I think I do,' I said.

"'Ready dust,' said my uncle, 'how lucky!'

"'Not altogether *that*.'

"'Then what's the use of telling on him to me,' said my uncle, with a queer look.

"'Because the child is—like to die,' I stammered out.

"'Is he? But how do you know that? and how do you know when? Come, come, I've no time to lose.'

"'The child was very ill when I came away, and I don't believe but what he'll die to-night.'

"'Or to-morrow morning, at least,' said my uncle; 'well, well, I'll give you a chance—one

day, more or less, doesn't make much odds—they must be fain to wait till Monday morning. Can't expect one to find a child like that at the first moment.'

"I had left the child ill, very ill indeed, and had thought it possible he might never get over it. So far, what I said, was true. And it was because it was so far true, that this fearful temptation came upon me. I don't think that I was so bad, that I could for a moment have coolly desired the death, or aided, however remotely, in the death of a little innocent.

"It was the persuasion that the child might probably die that decided me. Such are the snares of the enemy, young man.

"So the subtle fiend tampers with us and plays with us.

"Oh! let me recal that accursed night. Yes, let me steep my lost soul in bitterness—in the gall of remorse and horror! So shall I better celebrate His mercies, who came down to save the sinner ready to perish, and to wash his crimson blood-stained soul white as snow!

"The child!

"Boy, it was a sweet little innocent, loving

angel of a child, such as one sees now and then, coming wandering into this wicked world as if they had lost their way. It was a loving little thing, and its mother's darling.

" She was a hard-working, suffering woman, with her ten children, and her husband, dead; but she had laboured night and day—never lost heart nor hope, because she had trusted God! She had trusted her God! In that narrow stifled court she lived to Him, and she loved Him, and His peace and His strength were there.

" There was another mother, as I afterwards learned—another poor widowed heart, who had also another boy; but no matter, let me go on.

" I love to dwell upon that little angel's face. The child loved me, and as much, as such a grovelling beast as I was become, could love anything, I loved him. I had really taken a great deal of pains with the case, which was one of an accident, and I hoped to save the child, though sometimes, as I said, I was afraid I should not be able.

" But the demon of gain was upon me. I, who had been poor so long, whose whole spirit

was intent only upon getting rich—becoming independant!

"How lucky if the child would die!

"My uncle went away, promising to come again in the morning, and hear what I could do; repeating again that he would wait till the next night, Sunday, but longer than that, he could not, and that he would spend the next day hunting about for some other child, in case mine should fail him. So you see my uncle did not tempt me to this wickedness; it was the devil within that did it.

"I spent such a night—the worst I had ever spent till then. But it was but the preface to a long history, a faint preparation for nights upon nights that were to come—oh! of such inexpressible horror!"

CHAPTER II.

THE man went on with his history. Now he writhed—now he bit his clenched fist in a paroxysm of agony — now he buried his hands in his hair, and groaned aloud, and even tears in two streams ran down his hollow cheeks.

"Boy," he said, "whilst you live remember me, and this—the difference between the hour before, and the hour after a great crime. There is a regeneration to good—there is a malediction to evil—anathema maranatha—there is a moment of new birth when the soul bursts the fetters of the flesh, and sees and owns her God

—there is a moment when hell gapes, and all the horrors of the pit are opened.

"I was a bad man that night, but I was not a great criminal. I had the heart to commit, but I had not yet committed, a great crime. The difference is vast. Oh! it is among the inexhaustible mercies of our King and Master, that not every one actually commits the crime he is ready to commit. That we are spared, spared from the hideous consequences of our own wicked thoughts. That we are withheld from doing! Oh, that such mercy had been shown to me! Yet wretch that thou art to murmur! Have not the richest mercies been thine? Pardoned sinner! Bless the Lord, oh, my soul! and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

"Oh, that Saturday night, which I spent walking up and down my room, not able to lay down in my bed; wondering how the child was, recalling the circumstances of the accident, the appearance of the wound, calculating the chances of mortification!

"I was dressing myself the next morning in an absent manner, my mind in confusion, from the fever of the last night. The phantom of future success, wealth, and independence, all to be purchased by this one hundred pounds—which I already considered as my own—almost bewildered me. I had not made up my mind, mark you, that the child was certainly to die; but I *had* made up my mind, that some way or other, I would have the hundred pounds.

"I was indulging in wicked wishes, plans, and fancies, when they came to the door, and told me there was the mother of one of the parish patients below, who wished to speak to me, for her child was very bad, and like to die. My heart first beat violently—then stood as if it were still—then beat on again. My guilty wishes made me feel as if that consummation, which I certainly had not brought about, was guilt to me.

"I remember how I hurried about, forgetting this thing and that, and my hand shaking so with impatience, I could hardly put on my clothes. However, at last I got

down into the surgery, and there, sure enough, stood the very child's mother, with her apron to her eyes, crying. She had nine other children, yet she could not bear to spare one—the good soul.

"She told me how the fever and agony had increased dreadfully during the night—well they might, in the chamber in which those poor wretches were huddled together to sleep! —and that the little thing lay shrieking with pain. And she begged of me, so humbly and pathetically, to never mind my breakfast, but come directly and see what could be done! I knew what was wanted, and mechanically put a bottle of stuff into my pocket.

"So far, you see, I had not actually sinned. Habit was strong in me, to endeavour to give immediate relief. When people were in danger or suffering, it seemed a matter of course to try and help them. There was neither wrong nor right, goodness or badness in the act. It was a matter of course, as I said.

"So I *had* the bottle of stuff in my pocket all the time.

"There have been moments, young man,"

he added, lowering his tone, and his face becoming almost black with emotion, "when that little bottle, has hung round my soul like a weight of thousands and thousands of tons, dragging it down to despair—to that despair of God's mercy, which is perdition.

"I remember all that walk along those intricate, narrow, dark, filthy streets; the poor woman half-running, and sobbing and crying as she hurried along, and I making the best of my way after her. When we opened the door of the house, the shrieks and cries of the child were piercing.

"We stumbled up the broken old stairs, and got into the hovel rather than the room, where the poor little fellow lay upon his bed screaming with pain. By the symptoms, it was plain to me, upon examination, that mortification was setting in, and that without speedy relief, the child must be lost.

"That relief I had in my pocket.

"No one can tell till the Day comes, when all secrets will be revealed, whether the stuff I had in my pocket, would have saved the child's life or not, *that* rests with Him who

gave life; but this I do know, that I said to myself: 'Nothing can do any good; no use tormenting the poor thing.' Then when the child cried and shrieked, and the mother called passionately upon me to do something, I recollected some opium that I had in my waistcoat pocket, and I gave the child a little of that."

Claribert recoiled with involuntary horror.

"No, no; not active murder, only passive murder. I gave the opium to quiet the child's agony; no necessity to dose it. I knew well enough that the mortification, unless it could be arrested, would settle *that* matter; I had only to do nothing.

"I thought at that moment of temptation —it is thus the devil cheats us—I thought that to do nothing, was quite a different thing from doing *something*. I have met with people who would not administer a medicine to *prolong* life, when they would have died rather than have given one to shorten it.

"I didn't feel the full force of what I was about, till it was all over.

"I left the room as soon as I saw the child asleep under the effect of the opium, and went about my usual business, carrying the bottle away in my pocket.

"Would you like to see it? Here it is!" he cried, with an almost insane gesture, and gnashing his teeth, "here it is!"

And he drew from his bosom a little corked phial bearing every appearance of age.

"It is fifteen years ago; but here it is!" and grasping it with a wild, almost savage gesture, he returned it to his bosom.

"They came and fetched me about eight o'clock that night. I would fain not have gone, but my master said they had been making a fuss at a vestry meeting that very morning, on account of his negligence, and that go I must; and so, as I was slowly and unwillingly leaving the house, I met my uncle coming up to the door.

"'Well,' he said, 'are you ready?'

"'Shall be to-morrow night, midnight,' I said; and went on.

"The child was sinking fast—perhaps a cordial medicine, and the proper application to the

wound, might have saved its little life still. I cannot pronounce—all I know is, that I thought it would at the time.

"I was afraid they might send for my master if I went away—which I wanted terribly to do, for to sit by that little crib was horrible—but I kept my place; I thought of my hundred pounds, and I kept my place.

"The little thing! I see him now! I see him now! Wailing and groaning, yet so good; and speaking to me in such loving tones, as if I was his friend. It was too late then, or I think I must have saved him. Well, well, well! He died! he died! Do you see him?"

"See what?" cried Claribert, startled and looking round.

"He, the little thing—there, there, *I* do."

"So I had my hundred pounds; and I bought a shop I had set my heart upon, and began business, and throve and made money; but the more money I made, and the more I throve, the wretcheder man was I.

"If I had been a miserable, houseless beggar, begging my bread, crime and I would have seemed of kin; but here was I, thriving and respected, with a green coat and a pink waistcoat, admired by all the neighbours, and toadied and petted by half a dozen rich old ladies. And that child's face for ever before my eyes.

"I heard too, afterwards, what the poor little thing was wanted for — to impose the body upon a poor, wretched mother whose child was missing; and to whom they wanted to prove it was dead.

"The missing child, one wintry night, had been called suddenly home from where it was staying at his grandmother's, because its father lay a dying. The steward had been sent to fetch the child, and because the night was tremendous, and no carriage could at that time cross the country in such weather, he was to wrap the little boy well up, and bring him on horseback. He set off, taking the child, seated upon a cushion before him. They had to pass the ford of a river—Dana was the name of the place.

The night was very dark and bad. Neither the steward nor the child ever came home; the horse—"

"A black horse?" said Claribert, who had listened to the last part of this recital with extreme interest.

"I don't know, for that; but the horse came home alone. Some said the man and the little child were both drowned; some said the man was murdered and the child carried away. From that hour to this, I believe nothing has been heard of them. That body did its work. They buried the poor little creature in great state—for the lost child was some great man's heir—and so the man who was his heir-at-law, got the property; and He above alone knows the wicked injustice that was done."

"A dark night! on horseback! before a man who bade me not be frightened—though the water was very deep, and it blew and rained, as it seems to me, I have never seen it blow or rain since—and telling me to look how Black Bess got along, and what a brave swimmer she was; and that I should soon see papa and mamma, and have hot tea and buns. I

remember it. And then the man—Mr.—Mr. —Yates—yes, Yates—that was the name, saying, 'Here we are, all safe.' And Black Bess scrambling up the bank; and then dreadful faces, men and women — the gipsies! — they pulled me off the horse; and Hesther caught me up in her arms and carried me away, and there was a great noise and confusion!

"All is coming back to me now in the strangest way; *I* was that child, I had long curls of yellow hair then—mother used to love me for my curls."

"Then it was you that were wronged and lost—lost owing to my crime! For, when they showed the body of a child, everybody looked upon it as settled, and there was no further search made.

"This, at least, is what my uncle told me when he paid me the hundred pounds. I troubled myself no further about the matter. I have not thought of *that* part of the business as I ought to have done."

The boy spoke not, he was thinking deeply. He was endeavouring to connect his recollec-

tions together, so as to make a continuous story of the fragments of remembrances that lay confused together, and had thus suddenly reverted to his memory.

For some time he had suspected that he was not a gipsy child. So soon as he came to years of understanding, the fiction of his fairy origin, imposed upon him no longer. He had heard and learnt enough to divine that his vague recollections were remembrances of the time when he was other from what he was then. But as Charles terminated his story, a sudden flash of light seemed to revive the fondest images of the past. His grandmother's home, where he had been staying, and which he perfectly well recollected; though he had much fainter and more confused images of his father's castle, the remembrance of the night, the storm, the crossing the ford, Mr. Yates—all was vivid and clear.

"And cannot you tell me the name of the father to whom I belonged? I remember him faintly, a delicate, slender young man; and my mother—oh yes, I remember her well! In

white, as I kneeled upon her knee. Cannot you—cannot you tell me their names?"

"No, I know nothing of their names."

"The part of the kingdom where this happened?"

"No, I know nothing of that."

"Then how am I to trace it out? How am I to recover my parents—my home—all that I have lost?"

"Nay, I don't know. So you have forgotten me! You are turned aside upon a wild-goose chase to look after your parents, and you care not to hear of the Lord's dealings with me. It was to proclaim those, young man, that I began telling you this story—but you care not for tidings from Zion."

"Not now! not just now—another time. I should be a hypocrite if I pretended that at this moment, I could hear of anything but myself, and my own strange history! Good man, have patience with me. Another time, and you shall tell me all that the Almighty has done for you; but not now, not now, my heart is too big; but what can I do?"

"Nay, just nothing, it's my opinion. The

story is an old one, all this happened years ago. Besides, everybody is dead—my uncle is dead; my father is dead; I never heard the thing spoken of again. People do not talk of such matters when once they are over. The whole affair is passed out of people's minds; besides, what could you do? Come and say you were heir to such a one's estate, and ask him to turn out, and make room for you?"

"If the estate were mine by right, I should expect he would."

"Why, you cannot be such a ninny. No, no, no, don't set your mind upon that, but do as I would have you. Follow me—let us carry the good news of the gospel, and the gospel in body itself, to these deserted wildernesses of society, where light and warmth, the knowledge of God, and the love of God, and the peace of God never come."

CHAPTER III.

"We must have that over again, that last went charmingly."

And he leaned his violoncello against his knee, and looked up at her, turning over the leaves of his music-book as he did so, and humming the strain carelessly to himself.

She turned back the leaves of her book, placed her fair hands upon the pianoforte, and most obligingly began again.

This time the piece went better than ever.

"Bravo!" cried he, as he drew a long terminating tone upon the C string of his violoncello. "We played that charmingly."

The young lady turned her head and looked towards the windows.

The sun was shining very bright, and the air came in wooingly; and birds were singing, and the flower-garden and shrubbery were blooming with all the sweet blossoms of May. She longed to go out, and she would have said so, only she loved him better than he loved her, and she had let him know it; and he was selfish in his habits, though good-natured enough in his temper, and he took it some way as a matter of course, that what he wished, was to be done.

"I feel in the humour for that concert of Beethoven," said he.

"I don't think that will go well without a violin accompaniment," she replied. "You know it is for violin and violoncello obligato."

"True, we shall make a hash of it, for you don't play Beethoven well. I cannot inspire you with his spirit. Such a grand spirit of composition! Such depth of resource! Such learning! Such combinations!"

"I think I like Czerny better," she said, smothering a groan with some difficulty, and again looking towards the window. "It looks very pleasant upon the terrace to-day," she added.

He looked mortified, and glanced at her with something very like vexation in his face; but she looked so pretty and elegant, as she sat there half-aside upon her music-stool, one little hand resting upon the keys of her pianoforte, the other dandling with the ribbon of her sash; her fair face turned towards the window, showing the beautiful contour of her head and throat to such perfection, that, music-mad as he was, he could not be long angry. He got up, and reared his violoncello against the wall; and she, glad as a child released from her task, started up from her music-stool, and was out in a moment through the window.

He looked now quite cross; as vexed, at least, as a young man about to be married to a very pretty creature, with a very handsome fortune, could look or feel; but, in truth, there was a something about her which would have

pleased many men, but with which he could not be pleased. A childish, thoughtless gaiety —a yielding, good-humoured disposition—with a very great desire to oblige *him* in every possible way, and with every possible partiality in his favour, so that do what he would, he could neither vex or disoblige her, though he was perpetually feeling, that the things he most wished her to do she did against the grain, merely and solely to please him; and the things he most wished her to admire and enjoy, she really thought very tiresome and dull, and only pretended to think fine because he said so. In short, *that* all was unfortunately done, not from sympathy, but complaisance—not because she felt *with* him, but *about* him.

Many men would have been flattered and attracted, and their tenderness and affection excited, by such complying love, such anxious desire to please and be acceptable. But he was of a different disposition. He was not an ill-natured fellow, and therefore he bore it with good temper; and that is all we can say for him. He was not a brute; he managed to

tolerate being adored, without being downright brutal.

The day was very fine; he thought so as well as she did; and did not very much care after all whether he played the Beethoven or strolled in the garden: so he followed her out of the window, and walked up and down with his hands in his pockets, whilst she flitted like a butterfly from flower to flower, gathering first one and then another, bringing to him, as offerings, any that were more than usually beautiful—doing everything she could think of that was flattering and attentive, in order to please him; not sagacious enough to perceive how sadly she failed, or to understand the dull, *hébêté*, dissatisfied expression with which he flung himself down upon a garden-seat, and could have cursed the cloudless beauty of the day.

He sat there, looking anything but as he ought to have done—being, as he was, an accepted man, and accepted by the very pretty girl now amusing herself among the flowers upon the terrace borders, to say nothing of the

fine summer weather and of the beautiful view which his eye, as he sat there, might have commanded, had he but looked at it.

But he looked down upon the turf instead, kicking a pebble about with his heel—listless dull, and uncomfortable, he knew not why; as completely weary of having all things his own way, as any rich and idle young man could be; ready to shoot himself for want of something else; miserable from the mere misery of having nothing to wish for and nothing to do! But then what misery is more insupportable?

The prospect was indeed most beautiful which thus, like everything else, palled upon his sense. The terrace crossed a slope covered with turf, flower-beds, and shrubberies, which fell to the broad, majestically flowing river below, crossed at no great distance by a fine stone bridge; not far from which, the hoary towers of the ancient cathedral lifted their kingly crowns, like those of some ancient Saxon monument, above the secular elms and oaks which surrounded it.

The sky was of that deep, clear blue rarely

seen in England, and one or two white clouds slowly floated against it. Now and then a rook, winging its way to the rookery in the cathedral close, might be descried, giving that beautiful effect to this quiet scene which such an object produces; whilst the town, stretched far and wide, with house-tops of all sizes and forms—for it was a very ancient one—and its numerous church towers and spires, gradually melted, as it were, away among the copses and trees of the rich country. This lovely picture lay framed in a sort of basin formed by hills rising into mountains, peak behind peak, and swell above swell, till they were finally lost in distance.

He was an artist, or rather had been an amateur artist, and had loved sketching, but that had for some time been given up. He was weary of drawing, as he was weary of everything.

The fair girl came and went, came and went. Now she gathered one rose, and now she gathered another. Anon it was a bunch of mignionette, and then a pre-eminently beautiful carnation; the flowers were all

paragons in their sort, cultivated with exceeding care by the Dean's gardener.

For the Dean loved flowers, as he loved everything else that was beautiful and excellent in its way; and above all, he loved order, and regular persevering attention to a man's proper business. So, having gardens and gardeners, he chose that his gardeners should mind their business, and his gardens be well kept.

The Dean was a man of a calm, well regulated temper, of a sound rather than what can properly be called a fine intellect; for he was removed from all that could be called mean, calculating, selfish, or sensual; yet, perhaps equally incapable of anything very high, lofty, or enthusiastic. A dignitary of that church, so temperate in her speech, so moderate in her views and her discipline, he belonged to a school and to a day, which carried this temperance and moderation of view, to a point that verged upon indifference.

His life had been passed in a too serene region; he had not experienced those storms and buffetings of life which compel men to seek for something warmer, more cordial, more

close to the heart than this calm and measured feeling. What religion he had, sufficed for his own wants, and he had lived too dignified a life, had mingled too little with the striving, struggling, agonising world of suffering and temptation below him, to be adequately aware how much more than this might be wanted.

He was a good man, nevertheless, in his way —thoroughly good, though in a rather circumscribed circle of goodness; but possessing his own soul in tranquillity as he did, he was little aware of the intensity with which certain wants might be felt by others.

His conduct about his daughter's engagement was much of a piece with the rest of his life, and affords no bad example of the way in which he took things; and no bad proof, likewise, that this is a way, in which it will not exactly do to take them.

He loved his daughter, and had been as kind a father as a man of his disposition and habits could be. He took care, in the first place, to provide her with an ample fortune, a fortune considerably above what her position in life

really demanded. For though he was liberal of his money, generous and charitable among the poor, and ready handsomely to subscribe in aid of any charitable schemes of which others undertook the trouble—he considered himself perfectly justified in hoarding for his daughter, laying by for her a portion much larger than girls in her position usually received.

Then as to her education, he resolved to spare nothing upon that. That his wife, Lady Matilda, was a silly woman, and quite incapable of directing it, he was fully aware; but it does not seem to have suggested itself to him, that it would be well to supply that want which his own selection of a wife had occasioned, by personal exertions of his own. He took the matter in a plain, straight-forward, every day sense, without any anxious over refinements. A good school was the proper substitute for home education with an only child, under such circumstances, and accordingly he sent her to the best he could hear of; and at school, with the intervals of the holidays, the fair Maria had remained, till it was time to come home, and be introduced and married.

And a pretty, pleasing, accomplished girl, as we have seen, Maria came back—with a good heart and easy temper, which really wanted little helping, and her intellects, such as they were, neither cultivated nor developed in the least degree.

Everything had, as usual, been learnt by rote; it was all mere surface teaching; producing effects, if brilliant, most shallow; nothing of mind, nothing of reflection, nothing of character, nothing correct, serious, interesting, could be so produced, or was.

A pretty, empty, creature! a poor companion for a sensible man.

The Dean troubled himself not about that matter, but was quite satisfied to find his daughter amiable, elegant, and accomplished. As he never talked with her, never entered into any of those sweet confidences which sometimes subsist between fathers and daughters, he knew not how much was wanting. Perhaps he would not have detected the defect, even had he given himself the opportunity to become acquainted with it. The man who had married Lady

Matilda for her pretty face, and had been well enough satisfied ever since with his bargain, was not one to require much from women as companions.

The affair of his daughter's settlement in life, which he was very far from regarding with equal indifference, had been carried out upon the same principle of superficial propriety as all the rest. The Dean had long marked out Philip Gorhambury as the proper man. He united every condition of suitability and eligibility that would be required. Fortune, station, propinquity—no small matter this last as regarded one who would have abhorred the idea of leaving his loved Deanery, and re-entering the great world to introduce his daughter. This match lay close at hand, under his eye, whilst at the same time it was evident that nothing would be more agreeable than the connection to Mr. and Mrs. Gorhambury.

It does not seem to have mattered that the Dean secretly much disliked Mr. Gorhambury —that he neither esteemed his character, nor approved of his conduct, nor relished his company, or that still more, there was lurking in his

mind a kind of hidden, ill-defined distrust of him.

Mr. Gorhambury was a man of large estate, and of a good old family; therefore, to allow weight to any of the above objections in such a case would, in the opinion of such a man as the Dean, have been romantic and absurd to the highest degree. Neither did he admire Mrs. Gorhambury much more. He thought her cold, conceited, and interested. Nor even, if truth must be told, did he very particularly affect the son.

Philip Gorhambury was clever, sensible, and gentlemanlike, well informed, accomplished, and very good-looking; and yet the Dean did not like him much. But he, nevertheless, was very well pleased to have him marry his daughter.

Such is the way of the world.

The Dean sat in his library, made arrangements that the repairs of his cathedral might be done in the finest taste—and so they were; looked after his choristers—and his choir was celebrated throughout England; walked about his gardens—enjoyed the magnificent view his terrace commanded, or listened

to the grunt of the violoncello, and the brilliant tones of Maria's pianoforte, as they sounded through the open window of the dining-room, and was contented, and troubled himself no further.

Philip Gorhambury still sits there. His eyes fixed upon the turf, as he kicks the pebble with his heel, and never once lifting them up to watch his pretty *fiancée* strolling about. The expression of his face, if you could have seen it—but that would be rather difficult, he keeps it down so—is, melancholy?—Not quite. Ill-humoured?—Not quite. Moody?—Yes.

He is brooding in a sort of discontented, dissatisfied way, upon his prospects in life, and with every possession that in common opinion can make life enjoyable, asking what on earth there can be worth living for? He sickens at the sunshine; is disgusted with the comforts that surround him; detests the monotony of his easy existence; hates his friends; hates society; hates hunting and shooting; almost hates Maria, and entirely hates himself.

He thinks of his father's fine castle and grounds, which appear to him as the very cause of spleen; of the Dean's complete establishment, his elegant and comfortable house, and his handsome well-kept garden; and what can all these do for him? What cares he for comforts, the want of which he has never known, for splendour, the possession of which he has never enjoyed? Only once in his life had he really cared for anything, and that was a little sanded kitchen, and a tall, thin, dark girl sitting in it. But that is an old charm, something too much out of the way, ever to have been realised. He has long learned to look upon that as a fantastic, preposterous vision.

To marry Hernana!

The idea might, nay, certainly had crossed his mind once or twice, and seriously; but this was in those romantic, moon-calf days, when he was half-boy, half-man. All lads have some such absurd love notions in their heads at one time or other; of course they never come to anything. Besides, Hernana was gone, he knew not whither—somewhere to the continent with her father, to try this or that bath. She

never wrote to him, or to any one he knew. He had lost sight of her altogether for the last two years.

Those two years he himself had spent in the great world—partly in London, partly at Paris, Florence, Rome, or Naples. In these places he had exhausted all his passion for art. For his was not the true inspiration of genius—it had been rather an acquired taste learned from his mother, than the strong, genuine leaning of nature. And when he had seen the master-pieces of Italy, and in those situations so admirably adapted to display their perfections, his fastidious taste rejected everything that was inferior with disgust; so what he learned by his travels was not so much what were the true pictures to enjoy, as how very few master-pieces there were to be admired, and to despise everything short of perfection.

He left off sketching, he left off designing, he left off colouring, he could no longer please himself. His violoncello he still clung to, but he was becoming weary even of that.

He understood himself as little as his mother understood him.

His was, in truth, an earnest, serious, ardent character, formed for strenuous exertion and lofty efforts. But there was no call in his easy, well-provided life, for such great qualities; and he was wanting in that high tone of thought, that sense of duty and responsibility, which makes every life so serious and deeply interesting.

And oh! "How stale, flat and unprofitable doth seem to him the uses of this world."

He has been sitting in this mood some time. The figure that floats before his mind's eye, is certainly not one of a fair, blue-eyed girl, with a pretty pleasant countenance, a slight figure, particularly well dressed, and lovely ringlets of golden hair.

But this sweet creature now comes up to him, she begins to be tired of being taken no notice of, and she says:

"What may the superb Philip Gorhambury be thinking of, that he pulls so particularly long a face to day? Knight of the dolorous

visage, explain to me the subject of your lucubrations."

And as she spoke she laid a very fair, but rather too slender, hand upon his shoulder.

He started, wriggled his shoulders, as if something disagreeable touched them, and settling himself upon the seat, pursued the very interesting occupation in which he was engaged, not speaking indeed, but feeling very ill-humoured.

"Dear me, how very polite we are! Why, if my hand had been a toad, you could not have shaken it off more unceremoniously. Well, well—as Harriet Manvers used to say—men are incomprehensible creatures. I can't think what that little stone has done to you, that you kick it about so. Now, Philip—now," sitting down by him, "don't be so cross: just do me the enormous favour to look up, and tell me whether you ever in your life saw such a beautiful collection of roses?"

She put her fair hand under his chin, and would have lifted up the sulky face.

But he shook the hand off again, more

ill-humouredly than before, and this time he spoke:

"You do plague one so—"

"Oh!" said she, a little sulky in her turn, and turning away, so that her back was towards him, "oh!—"

"Can't you let one alone? I beg your pardon, Maria, but that's a way you have. Every man has his sullen moments, and a woman should know when to let him alone."

This most modified concession, and half-sort of implied apology, was a good deal, I can tell you, from Mr. Philip Gorhambury, and a good deal more than she was accustomed to; but some way this time it did not produce its usual effect. She felt hurt and offended at the rebuff she had received, and she still continued to turn away from him.

She began to pull the beautiful roses to pieces, and to scatter the leaves upon the ground.

"Oh! very well," said he. "We are angry, are we? Just as you please: I did not mean to offend you."

"Oh, Philip!" turning her head to him, and a tear standing in each eye, "how unkind you are to me! I sometimes think you cannot love me at all."

"Nonsense! love! Women—girls, at least, have such foolish notions about love—love and nonsense! You don't think men keep going down upon their knees, and worshipping the bright eyes of their beloveds, from morning till night, now-a-days, do you? How can you be so absurd? One gets tired of making love; and besides, I always hated making love—I never was a good hand at it. Do not be foolish, Maria!"

And he put his hand under her chin now, and tried to turn the poor little sorrowful face, which was again averted, towards him.

The slight caress appeased her, for she was naturally of a sweet, placable temper, and she turned her face to him and smiled.

She forgave too soon, perhaps; and yet, if she had maintained the appearance of ill-humour, would he have liked her the better for it?

Alas! he cared not for her; no mood of hers could interest him.

"You are a very naughty boy, Philip," she said, trying to rally and to be lively, and, as she fancied, captivating, "and you deserve that I shouldn't look at, or speak to you again for the whole day. You are the most ungallant of lovers, and deserve that I should punish you well; and I have a good mind to do it by getting up and walking away, and not seeing or speaking to you till dinner-time."

He thought this speech as vapid and stupid as you do; and the worst of it was, would have been very glad if she would have been as good as her word, and would have taken herself away and left him for some hours.

His thoughts had travelled far in another direction, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he brought them back. He was thinking of times earnest, simple, sincere, and hew as longing to escape and get into the town and make his way to the old deserted Parsonage, which had now been shut up for nearly two years.

Mr. Gorhambury had, in consideration for Mr. Lovel, taken a temporary curate, who occupied lodgings in the town. The old parsonage-house had, therefore, been deserted.

She tried to coquette with him a little more, making use of her roses and her mignionette as the medium of her little innocent *agaceries*, The tears were hardly dry in her eyes, yet she was already smiling, her cheeks looked like two roses themselves, and her face was really very sweet and pretty.

Pity, pity, pity! It was all lost upon *him*. The magic influence was wanting, and where that is wanting it is all one. Pretty or ugly, amiable or the reverse, it matters not. Thus a half-hour was dawdled most unsatisfactorily away—she trying to please, and he, at least gracious enough to try to appear pleased—when, to his infinite relief, Maria's maid appeared at the other end of the terrace, and coming up, said, her lady was waiting for Miss Westmore to try a new dress. Would she please to come?

Upon which, Maria arose, and slowly loitering along took the way to the house, hoping that Philip would follow her; but he did not. He

remained sitting where he was till she was fairly out of sight, and then he rose and traversing the terrace with quick steps, quitted the garden by another way.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a strange humour that Philip Gorhambury had indulged, as he sat musing upon that seat on the terrace, insensible to all the beauty of external nature around him. Dreams of other days, those visions of the past which sometimes rise with such unexpected force, calling up emotions long buried, in comparison with which the present is as nothing, had risen up like spectres before him.

Spectres of the past they were, some melancholy, some most happy, some accusing! They might be compared to those airy forms by which Retzch strives to give visible existence to

such fleeting fancies floating before the mind's eye. Some with earnest, most sincere expression, filled with a certain grave and serious hope, others smiling and tender, breathing a peaceful joy; but the forms which closed the procession gradually darkened into sadness and melancholy, and their eyes spoke a gentle, mournful reproach.

He could not bear this. This earnest, serious past contrasted as it was with the smooth, shallow, insipid present. This present of tranquillity without repose—of peace, where there was no peace. This unruffled calm of life was to him as irritating as a dead calm at sea, where all is bright and shining, and all immoveably passive and still proves to the enterprising and impatient mariner.

Looking up, his eye had traversed the landscape which lay spread out so beautifully before him, and suddenly had caught what he thought must be the pointed gables of the old parsonage house. He had been immediately seized with an irresistable desire to visit the spot once more, a spot he had never ventured to go near since his return home.

He descended the stone steps that led from the terrace, and following a winding walk which passed through the shrubberies upon the slopes below, he came to a little iron wicket, that let him out upon a wide road leading towards the town.

To his great satisfaction, the road was at present entirely deserted, not a single passenger was to be seen upon it. Tall hedges rose upon either side of this wide well kept way, and high hawthorns nodded, and roses and honeysuckles grew slantingly. It was charming, as are the ways in that rich romantic country, where every hedgerow has its peculiar character of beauty.

It was a lovely afternoon. The sun shining so brightly over all. The dark blue sky so clear. The birds creeping and making their still sounds in the bushes, for singing days were over; the murmur of the distant town!

These things soften and attune the heart into harmony with high and tender thoughts; and all that was imaginative, and all that

was simple and pure in Philip Gorhambury's feelings were excited.

So he went along this pleasant highway, moving rapidly, and his heart very full; but as he approached the town he could not bear to enter the High Street, and mingle with the people there; quiet as the High Street at G—— usually was; so he turned down a little by-lane, which he knew would lead him in the direction of the old Parsonage.

It led that way, but through wretched streets and narrow filthy alleys, such as one too often finds on the outskirts of a pretty large town, especially if that town has not been very well kept and attended to, and no sanitary commission been there.

Sanitary commissions were not in existence in those days; but sometimes good citizens, men advanced in years, who had retired from business, yet had preserved their active and industrious habits, employed their leisure in looking after such things, and encouraging order and cleanliness; but where this was neglected, as it had been here, the effect was grievous.

The wretched rows of cottages, ruinous for want of decent repairs, were fronted by rugged broken palings, which separated the lane from the adjacent fields. The lane unpaved, filled with ruts and holes, mostly reeking with stagnant water, was a receptacle for all the dirt and litter, thrown by the inhabitants out of doors; cleansed only by the cart of the scavenger, which might appear once or twice a month. Dirty children, dirty mothers, with torn unmended gowns, and caps half off their heads, were hanging about the doorways; mewling infants and scolding wives, were heard through the open doors.

Our poet, and man of taste and refinement, hurried along, flying the disgusting scene as he would have done the pestilence. It never once entering his head to associate himself in any manner with it. To remember that these poor creatures were of the same brotherhood as himself, and to ask, whether the superfluity of time, money, and luxury, which was his portion, might not be in some degree employed to their benefit.

He thought of nothing but of hastening by,

and soon got out of this vile suburb; and then, through little narrow streets of somewhat more decent appearance, he at last arrived at the well know open space, where the ancient parsonage stood.

I forgot whether I told you that this gloomy old mansion—which Mrs. Gorhambury would have found it impossible to exist in, and which offended her husband's ideas of state and propriety as much as her's of elegance and comfort—had, by him, been given up to his curate Mr. Lovel. Mr. Gorhambury occupying a handsome house in one of the fashionable streets.

It was now, and long had been, silent and deserted, for the gentleman who had undertaken the duty during Mr. Lovel's absence, being a single man, had preferred lodging elsewhere; so that the old parsonage had been left to take care of itself, with the exception of such attention as a very old woman who lived in a small house hard by afforded it.

The little iron wicket which led into the garden was not, however, locked; but the latch

was so rusted, that it could scarcely be moved. He laid his hand upon it and endeavoured to open it, which, though not without some violence, he effected. The latch yielded, the gate opened, and gave him admittance to this melancholy wilderness.

There lay the gravel walk before him, leading straight up to the old house, with its front of narrow gables, each one surmounted with a cross and containing a casement window. Opposite to him was the ancient oak door and quaint porch, with its little windows upon each side, and its hoary walls covered with trailing shrubs and evergreens—when last he had been there, all neatly trimmed and led along the walls, now lying in wildest confusion, torn down or dropping by the weight of their unpruned branches. Rich crimson and snow-white roses, dark masses of purple virgin-bower, lauristinas and honey suckles, mingled together in a confusion of desolation that would have furnished a rich picture for Tennyson's pencil.

He would have done it justice in a few words. I cannot. The old dark-brick house stood mournfully amidst all these masses of verdure

and flowers, seeming to look out through her closed, small-paned windows, with a most disconsolate air. All was perfectly still; doors and windows shut; the door without not only closed but grown over; for a large white rose-bush tumbling from its fastening had fallen right across it, and its snowy flowers and green leaves half buried the small steps. These steps were moss-grown, and long strings of the blue periwinkle, which grew in the border under the house, had covered them so, that a certain skill in pioneering seemed necessary to make your way to the door, and seize the knocker.

He had no woodman's bill with him to clear an entrance, but he had no idea of making one. He stood there looking mournfully round at this picture of desolation, upon which the glorious mid-day sun, as if in mockery, was brightly shining.

Recollections were thronging thick upon him.

Recollections! he had not till that moment imagined how dear!

That one! that earnest master-spirit, before which his seemed to bow, but bow with pleasure, as one would bend before the image of

those angels which "excel in strength." In whose society life, and its calls, and its duties, took such a serious aspect: Where the grand majestic sorrow gave interest and value to the sweet passing joy! With whom he felt altogether a different man—a sobered, serious, feeling, worthy man! Yes, worthy! For was there not worth in every sentiment she inspired?

Her, whose existence seemed at once so simple and sublime! where love or desire of wealth and ambition, and art, and the love of beauty, and all that constitutes what is emphatically called the world, lost their weight and their power to thrall! and the emancipated soul seemed to breathe a purer, brighter atmosphere rising into the empyrean, into the infinite element as it were!

Where, where was she now?

And, oh grief! remorse! and regret! whereever she might be, what was she to him?

For had he not given, thrown himself away, sold himself and that precious inner life of his, to the outward conventionalities of the world, to proprieties and suitabilities, and the grati-

fication of tastes that were, after all, not his real tastes! Tastes for what? For music and pictures, and æsthetics, as they call them, and had lost the higher life! the life of our life!

He stood there gazing some little time mournfully, as I have said, and then he stealthily crept round the house, taking the little well-known, gravelled path, now green with damp moss, and with the grass, once so neatly trimmed on either side, now falling in decayed masses upon it. He wanted, and yet he almost feared, to go to that window, the window which he had so often approached with such pleasure, when he caught the bright blaze of the fire glaring upon the little open casement, and looking in, he had seen that fine dark girl engaged in her wholesome, daily toils of usefulness and kindness.

With what rapture had he then been wont to catch the first glance of that eye, when startled and surprised by his sudden appearance, she had not time to conceal the first bright flash of delight.

The window was closed like all the rest now; and like the rest, around it lay a wilderness of vegetable disorder, the more unsightly, as there were no flowers or ornamental shrubs to redeem it. Old pot-herbs, grown into huge branchy brushwood; a pear-tree all knotted and full of useless and deformed boughs, and so on.

He, however, approached the window. He *would* look in. He was in a humour to drink this cup of wormwood to the dregs. He would fill his soul with the melancholy image of that once cheerful little chamber, now dark and unoccupied.

He was mistaken there, however, for as he drew near the window to look, a faint glimmer from within was perceptible. There was a small fire blazing in the kitchen grate, and a very old woman, in a very old gown and a very old bonnet, was upon her knees, engaged in scrubbing the floor. A lean and melancholy cat was the only other occupant of the kitchen; it was walking up and down the dresser, under the shelves, mewing and restless.

He stood there rivetted to the spot, looking

in, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy, indeed; indulging his recollections without restraint.

Not troubled by any conscientious scruples was he. He had allowed himself a strange sort of sophistry as regarded poor, pretty Maria, having settled it with himself that it was all her own doing, that it was her too undisguised partiality which had drawn him to this step; that she had chosen him, not he her; and that if he did not and could not care for her, that was her look out, not his. There was nothing approaching to treachery on his part, for who could help their feelings?

So he indulged his waywardness without the least compunction. When he was in the humour to like her, it was all very well; he gave vent to the passing satisfaction, and she was excessively happy. When he was in the mood to quarrel with his lot, and to consider her as shallow, childish, and uninteresting, he did himself no violence to conceal that either; and she was perplexed and unhappy, not knowing what to make of him. She was too ignorant of human nature and of the ways of

man, to conceive that one who seemed at times so kind, could in reality be so indifferent.

He continues standing there, now, however, with his face close to the casement, perfectly careless or insensible to any wrong he may be doing his betrothed, by the regrets he is indulging. And he had stood there some time, when suddenly the old woman, lifting up her head, was aware of a man close to the window. She uttered a cry, and called out:

"Who's there? What do you want? What are you doing there?" getting up at the same time, and looking a good deal frightened.

A second glance at the casement, however, satisfied her that it was no horrid burglar endeavouring, with nefarious purpose, to enter and rob this house, in which there was no earthly thing to be stolen; but a very well-dressed and handsome young gentleman, with a new and fashionable hat upon his head, who was thus intently watching her operations.

So, after settling her old black bonnet, untying and tying her apron, and tidying her dress in other respects a little, she approached the window, undid the long-closed casement

with some difficulty, and asked him: "What he was pleased to want?"

"Nothing, thank you! I merely turned into the old garden to look about me a little."

"Mr. Gorhambury, Sir? Mr. Philip Gorhambury, Sir! My goodness, Sir! It is you, sure enough! What a mortal long time it be, since I have set my eyes on your blessed face!"

"My blessed face! I'll be hanged if I ever saw yours, though, my good old lady!"

"Never saw mine! Now, my dear boy, how can you talk so! Sure enough, you must remember old Betty?"

"Betty! Betty! Oh! sure enough, as you say, I *do* remember you now! And how has it been with you, old Betty, since you and I last met—how long ago?"

"Bad enough! bad enough! and long enough ago! Two years—two mortal years since ye all went away! First, you took yourself off, Mr. Philip; and then my poor master, and sweet Miss Hernana, and Lady Aylmer, and all! All my friends at once! But seeing you all flew away together, I reckon

you're all coming back together; for here's you first; and if I beant scouring this very kitchen, a getting it ready for *them !*"

"How! you don't say so? Coming back! I thought they were at Aix—Carlsbad—Barèges—who knows?—somewhere for his health; that he could not live in England, and that they were away, for nobody knows how long! Coming back, did you say?"

"Yes, Sir! a-coming back, as sure as my name's Betty Besom! I had a letter come to me from Miss Hernana yesterday is a week, with orders to begin and cleanse the old house from top to bottom, and riddle up the old furniture—law! but it *be* old, beant it?—and get all ready agin they come back, which was to be in about a month or so from this time, or may be sooner, may be later—she could not exactly say when; for it seems Mr. Lovel was still in a very precarious state, and it was uncertain how he could travel, sometimes he getting along pretty comfortable, at others making long stops, you see."

He stood after she had said this for a moment quite still and speechless.

I don't exactly know how to describe the odd feeling he had about his heart. A young lady would probably have fainted—he leaned against the side of the window.

At last gasping and gulping, and with a strange choking about his throat, he managed to get out:

"You haven't got the letter about you, have you?"

"Aye, Sir, I think I have," fumbling in her handkerchief. "I mostly keeps it pinned here; for it's not often I gets a letter, and when I does, I makes a sort of a treasure of it. More especially when it comes from Miss Hernana; for that young woman's a rare one, if ever there was one in the world; and her father's as good in his way, as she in her'rn; and as for that Lady Aylmer, she's not to sneeze at neither, to my mind."

And thus discoursing, she kept fumbling at her old yellow handkerchief, and in process of time drew forth a letter, bearing a foreign postmark.

How he felt when he got this little scrap of paper actually into his hand—when after

more than two years of total silence and absolute separation—as absolute as the separation by death—eighteen months of partial, and three months of declared infidelity upon his part, he found her thus brought before him again, I leave those to imagine who have experienced such things, and despair of making any one understand who has not.

Total separation, like death, seems to weaken, and at last obliterate, the strongest affections: and yet they lie, but motionless, as man lies in the grave. They are not dead, but sleeping: and at the appearance of the beloved object, they are restored in their full brightness and vivacity, like pictures drawn in sympathetic ink when exposed to the fire.

His hands trembled, his eyes almost refused their office, so dimmed were they—his brain seemed almost incapable of comprehension, it was reeling so, as he, with his heart now beating with violence, now stopping, as if it would never beat again, read the few simple hurried lines before him. They were written in a hasty, but large and legible hand,

evidently intended to suit with Betty's literary capacities.

"Barèges, June 14.

"My dear Betty,

"This is to tell you, my dear, good woman, that at last the doctors have decided that, not all the waters in the world can do anything more for my dear father; and he so wearies to get home, and to his parish again, that I could be almost glad of it. We are to start from this place next week, and shall travel by easy journeys home. So, my good woman, lose no time, after the receipt of this letter, in putting the old place into a little order.

"Go and ask Mr. Bencraft, the church-warden, to lend you five pounds, which you must make go as far as *ever* you can; and get in some coals, and have the house well *aired* and cleaned down, and things put a little to rights, that they may look comfortable for my father when he comes home. But above all things, take care the house is *well*

aired. It must be very damp, I fear: so, though I told you to be sparing of the money, don't spare in coals; for if my father should get a fresh chill, it would be very bad for him.

"Take care of *that*, dear, good woman, and put two feather beds and two mattresses on *his* bed; so you must take both my mattress and my little feather bed—I am used to sleep upon straw here—and I will show you how to make it do very well. I will write to you again, by and bye; but set to work as soon as you get this, for I do hope we shall be at home soon.

"Your affectionate friend,

"HERNANA LOVEL."

"P.S.—You need not go to any expense about the garden, which I dare say is in a horrid state. I will see to that myself when I get home, which I think will be in about a month after you will receive this."

He turned the letter about, no address or date; nothing more.

"And how long is it, since you got this?"

"A week, come to-morrow, wasn't it? I can't be quite sure. Stay! not so much as that."

"And in about a month they will be back?"

"Ay, so it says; don't the letter, Sir? I spelled it all out myself: it's written in such a nice big hand."

"Be back in about a month!" and he put his hand to his head, for he felt bewildered.

"Yes, Sir; yes, Sir."

"About a month—about a month!—And no address, no possible means of communication! And in about a month, about a month!"

And then there rose a pageant of what was to come off in about a month, too.

A wedding, and bridesmaids! and wedding breakfast, and fine dresses, and trinkets! He was sick of the whole subject, for he had heard so much about it; and of the trinkets his mother had been so busy designing for him,

and helping him too with designs for trinkets for her; they were to be in an exquisite taste, a taste more than common.

And now these things rose in a sort of ghastly mockery before him! The bridesmaids looked like wan ghosts, and the dresses, and the presents, and the breakfast, and those abhorred trinkets! And, in the midst of all, the bride, looking so fair and so fresh-coloured, with her long golden ringlets so bright, and smiling, and looking so pleased and happy!

Fool! looking so content and happy!

And then, in contrast with this gay and gaudy butterfly, there rose a figure, with her pale thin face, and her dark earnest eyes! and her tall, noble, though attenuated figure! a figure built for large development, but yet never entirely developed. Those long, thin, but graceful arms! those simple, unaffected yet most interesting movements! that figure, in short, instinct with soul!

And what a soul!

What an intellect, and what a heart! and what a noble, noble character.

He could bear these thoughts no longer. He turned away, and leaving the old woman to her scrubbing, made his way through the desolate garden, and so to the Deanery, where he was at present staying upon a visit.

CHAPTER V.

"WHAT is the matter with my son?" said Mrs. Gorhambury. The whole family, including Mr. Gorhambury himself, were at present staying at the Deanery. "What is the matter with *mein Sohn*? that he looks so melancholy and Werter-like, and sits solitary upon this sofa, remote as the Atlantic isles, poring over a book, which book I am certain he is *not* reading; whilst a bright galaxy of wax lights is kindling at the pianoforte. The beloved violoncello is being leaned against his chair; and the fair lady of his heart, like some genius of harmony, sits there, with her locks like

threads of gold, and her cheeks like roses! She reminds one of the fables of Aurora. What is the matter with *mein Sohn?*" laying upon his shoulder her fair hand, white as snow, and soft as down, and sparkling with a few jewels of inappreciable value.

He answered not, kept his head down, and his eyes fixed upon his book, continuing—*not* to read.

"Nay, nay. Is the subject so deeply interesting? Come, come!" endeavouring playfully to take the book from him. "Have done with this pretence of study, the sweet girl at the pianoforte is waiting for you."

He placed his two hands upon the book, so as to prevent her taking it, and with a slight shrug of the shoulder, attempted to displace his mother's hand.

"No answer? Nay, then, something *is* the matter. Are you not well, Philip?"

"No," said he, bluntly, still without looking up, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the pages.

"What is the matter, dear Philip? Look up, don't keep your eyes turned from me in

that sulky sort of way. If you are not well, say so at once. See, fairer eyes than mine are beginning to bend anxiously upon you."

Maria had turned round upon her music-stool where she sat, waiting in dutiful expectation for her lord and master's attendance; violoncello in hand. She was looking with anxiety their way. She could not conceive what could be the matter.

Mrs. Gorhambury bent down and whispered to her son angrily.

"Philip, what new caprice is this? Really, your conduct is abominable! well or ill, get up and take your violoncello. How can you keep any woman—most of all *the* woman, waiting in this rude abominable manner."

"I am not in the humour for music, to-night."

"Not in the humour! What do you mean? Humour or not humour, the Dean, who is luckily out of the room just now, asked for music; let him find you at your place when he comes back. Beethoven he asked for, the sweet Sonata in A, with that minuet, which is

all sighs—so lovely—and you play the accompaniment so charmingly, child."

"I like well enough to play it with you; but I hate to play it with *her*—she has not a notion of it."

"But you can't play it with me," said the mother artist; all that was mother, and the far more than that, all that was artist, pleased with the compliment; for what mother is angel enough not to be a little tempted to jealousy of a son's bride, and not to be charmed to find some little corner where there is a preference for her left. "But you can't play it with me, you naughty, tiresome boy; and the dear thing has been practising at it from the time she came in from walking till dinner-time, and now those star-like, or dove-like eyes of her's, are turning this way, and her little heart is calling you very unkind."

Upon which he rose with a half-stretch, half-yawn, and drawing himself up his whole handsome height, dragged himself rather than strolled to the pianoforte; and sitting down upon the chair ready placed for him, began to take up

and handle his violoncello, and then turning the leaves of the music, which was ready prepared upon the desk, he said:

"Well! Where are we to begin?"

"You said you wished me to learn the Beethoven Sonata, in A, and I have been trying it. It is very hard, and for my part, I cannot see much beauty in it; but, perhaps, I shall like it better when you play it with me."

"No you won't. Why should you? If you cannot enter into the divine beauties of such things without my help, what's the use of my trying to inspire you? I never met but with two women in the world who had power enough in themselves to understand the powers of this man, and one of them is my mother. You shall hear her play Beethoven."

Now you must know that Maria was the favourite pupil of the master most in vogue at the time; that her finger was most brilliant, her execution splendid; she loved to fly over and sweep the keys; and in secret despised Cramer and all his school, and the somewhat common-place and emphatic style of expression with which the pupils of that once renowned

master, who still linger at the keys, are apt to render their meanings. She had no taste for Beethoven; but Beethoven squeezed out of the keys by Mrs. Gorhambury she detested. Also, though she was very good-humoured and unaffected, and not apt to pique herself upon anything, if there was that thing upon which she did pique herself, it was her pianoforte playing; though without the least pretension to that, be it understood, in which both Mrs. Gorhambury and her son were proficient—counter point and all the points included.

Therefore Miss Westmore, though not easily offended, felt a little piqued at this last speech, and she put up her lip and said:

"Really! I didn't know Mrs. Gorhambury was such a *great* professor."

"It may not be necessary to be a very great professor, I suppose, to have something to teach you; or is your musical education so complete that nothing can be added to it?" he said, contemptuously, turning over the leaves of his book with the bow of his violoncello, and then drawing a splendid prolonged note across the strings.

"I don't pretend to be a first-rate musician,

Mr. Philip Gorhambury ; but, at least, I think I may venture to say, there are not many people here, who have anything to teach *me*."

" I don't agree with you in the least."

She turned her face and gave him such a hurt, mortified glance; this he either did not, or pretended not, to observe, but saying negligently : " Are we ever to begin ?" commenced tuning his instrument, sounding the note upon the pianoforte with his bow; whilst she sat there uncertain whether to obey and begin, or get up from the music-stool in a pet.

" Eh bien !" he said, after waiting a few seconds, " je suis aux ordres de Mademoiselle."

What could she do ? his unruffled calmness and serenity, whilst her head was throbbing with vexation and passion, imposed upon her. Mechanically her small slender fingers run up the preliminary scale, a few chords followed, and glancing at her companion, she began.

Her soul was a musical instrument. As she proceeded she became animated, forgot her injuries, and played with her accustomed spirit and brilliancy.

The Dean who had re-entered the apartment, was delighted, and cried " Bravo " as this pre-

liminary movement came to a close. And then followed that lovely minuet—that minuet which, as some one said, is like the breath of softest sighs, almost too delicate for human ear, and which I defy any true lover of music to give to his or her perfect satisfaction. Something more than an exquisite touch will ever be wanting to render so exquisite a conception. The Dean, who loved music well, held his breath; Philip forgot everything at the moment, but the enchantment of those few and simple tones.

But Maria!

Alas! she was not made to understand such music. She found nothing particular in the strain—

> "A primrose on a river's brink,
> A yellow primrose was to her;"

and it was nothing more.

He threw down his bow in despair, and glanced at his sympathizing mother.

In such a grief as that, what mother but must sympathize?—Mrs. Gorhambury most of all mothers. In spite of her anxiety that Maria and Philip should be all in all to each other, something of the jealousy of the artist, not to

say something of the ill-nature of the artist, spoke in the meaning smile which said: "She is quite unequal to comprehend that, I own."

"What do you stop for, Mr. Gorhambury? What is amiss, a string broke? No. Shall we begin the minuet again?"

"No, thank you; I hate to hear a thing I like, mangled—I mean misunderstood. Shut the book, and let's have a galop, or a waltz, or anything you like, I can't play any more to night," said he, getting up and restoring his violoncello to its case. "I've got a confounded headache, that is it, Maria. You go playing on, will you? and I'll take a turn upon the terrace, for this room is abominably hot, and I don't know what's the matter with me."

She looked up at him again, as she had done in the morning, wistfully, pained and hurt, yet afraid to let him see it. She had so completely yielded—shall I say so weakly yielded—to her partiality for him, that she had made herself his very slave.

His very slave, because she was her own slave—the slave of her own affections.

She knew not, even in the best affections, of the virtue, the dignity, the strength there is in self-control. Poor thing! she had never been taught it.

She had never been taught the sin and the danger of idolatry. She thought a girl could not be too deeply in love with the man she was about to marry. Perhaps not, if the love be a right love, built upon something better than mere fancy, and a school-girl's first romance.

"He that hath not the rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls," saith the wise man. She who has abandoned the command of her own affections is, indeed, a defenceless, feeble thing.

To please Philip Gorhambury was, to the poor Maria, the principal, one may say almost the sole object, in life; of higher objects she had the most confused and imperfect ideas.

He had been so used to receive this sort of fond idolatry from many women—weak and silly, as women so often suffer themselves in this respect to be—that he set no value upon it.

There was one that loved him in a worthier and more noble way, whose love, deep and devoted as he knew it had been, yet inspired him with a certain respect. There was that about it which he dared not have offended. That in it, to be maintained, only as it had been begun, by desert and merit.

And he went out upon the terrace again to muse upon that image, and to compare it with the faint, pale, shallow sentiment evidenced by that other in the drawing-room. A deep, intense oil painting of Domenichino, with a portrait in crayons by Angelica Kauffman.

But as he walked up and down the terrace, he soon left off comparing. He ceased to think of the poor little crayon at all; and dwelt only upon that one—that deep earnest one, who now

weighed down with the care of a sick and impoverished father, was painfully wending her steps to her humble home.

And then he bethought himself of the overgrown, desolate wilderness of a garden which surrounded that house, making it so dark, melancholy and unlovely; and he recollected how Hernana loved flowers; and the pleasure she had taken, in keeping her garden trim, and in the good order and arrangement of her kitchen-garden, and of all around her. And then he dwelt with a sort of rapture upon her generous disregard of all these things, in comparison with others more important — of her tender, even lavish attention to her father's comforts and little pleasures, and her unflinching spirit of self-denial as regarded her own; and he contrasted this life of virtue and strength, with his own weak, self-indulgent career, and with the luxury and self-indulgence, the objectless lives of those with whom he was surrounded.

Not one among them all, in right good

earnest about anything! Not one among them all, occupied in any more important concerns than the mere external comforts and luxuries, and the little passing distractions and successes of the day.

And he felt a worse man, and a better man. A better man; for his aspirations, at least, were more purified and exalted. A worse man; for he was meditating an act of signal treachery. He meditated the doing wrong; but it seemed to his ill-regulated principles and blinded conscience, that the occasion justified the wrong, and that where affections were so well placed as his, it was justifiable to seek their gratification at any cost.

And yet he had not the honour, and the sincerity, and the manliness, I ought to say, the mere common honesty and good faith to come openly forwards, and say this.

To tell his mother, and poor pretty Maria, and the Dean, and all of them, that he had been under a mistake; that he had pledged

himself in ignorance of the real state of his own heart; that in the hidden recesses of that heart, another reigned, and that truth and honour, required him to do Maria this poor justice—declare his feelings, and break with her at once—rather than commit the far greater wrong of going on trifling with her affections in this manner, offering at last an absent heart—perhaps at the eleventh hour breaking with her altogether!

He had not the manliness, and the righteousness to say all this. Partly because he was a coward. His heart was not true and faithful, and could not stand by him; he feared his mother; he feared the tears and swoonings of Maria; but most of all, he feared the Dean, whom he greatly respected. And then, to tell the truth — in one respect, things remained precisely as they had been, or rather worse.

Hernana was still poorer and more obscure than ever; and his acquaintance with the world had not tended to make him relish the idea of

an obscure marriage at all, more than he had formerly done. A marriage with the Dean's daughter was quite a splendid thing—a match it was a credit to make. She was reckoned so pretty, and the Dean was so much esteemed, and said to be so wealthy; and the thing was altogether so brilliant, so respectable, and all that.

This last train of argument, though never perhaps precisely stated to himself in so many words, was not without its effect.

In short, the result of all these contradictory and jarring feelings was, as many colours make white, to end in nothing. He remained passive as regarded the main affair, and let day follow day, and the projected marriage gradually draw near, whilst he suffered his thoughts to be almost completely absorbed with the question of when she would come home? and a few other little things connected with that event.

The principal of these was the arrangement of her garden. He had nothing to do, plenty of leisure, plenty of money, and plenty of that sort of love which finds its most delightful

occupation in laying out one's superfluity upon its object.

That very night, so impatient was he, that he left the terrace and went down into the town; and sought out a gardener he happened to know, who lived in a somewhat remote corner of the place, and whom he pitched upon as the proper person to execute his plan.

To this man he accordingly went, and arranged with him that, at six o'clock the next morning, men should be set at work to put the garden at the old parsonage house into order. As for the planting and adorning it, he reserved all that part of the business to himself, indulging himself with all sorts of visionary schemes as to its arrangement, and picturing the surprise and pleasure of Hermana, when she should first, in place of a wilderness of weeds, find a very Eden of sweets, and her garden filled with the rarest and most costly flowers that could be procured.

He took the precaution not to name himself to the gardener, who was not acquainted with

his person, but to represent himself as acting under Lady Aylmer's and Miss Lovel's orders. And Lady Aylmer was so well known as the intimate friend, and almost as a member of Mr. Lovel's family, that nothing appeared more natural than that she should contribute to this little plan for adorning his abode.

Lady Aylmer was, indeed, it was generally believed, travelling with the Lovels, but nothing was exactly known. Her house, occupied during her absence by two faithful servants, was always ready swept and garnished, and there needed no premonitory signal of her return for those who so well kept watching.

So, having successfully carried out thus much of his plan, Philip Gorhambury returned to the Deanery in much better humour and spirits; and was so unprincipled and so inconsistent as to sit down to a little supper, which it was customary at the Deanery to have served about ten o'clock, with a face from which all traces of the headache had vanished, and to talk and chat good-humouredly with

Maria. She, easily deceived, and again satisfied, laughed and prattled away, coquetted a little, and simpered a good deal; and, in short, took the very way to displease her fastidious lover, if he had been in the humour to be displeased, which at that moment he was not.

The next morning, Philip Gorhambury, who had scarcely slept at all, kept awake by his impatience, and by the composition of all sorts of schemes for laying out gardens, which crowded into his feverish brain, was up at five o'clock, and stealing down stairs, he let himself out by the glass door which led to the terrace. From thence he rapidly passed through the still sleeping town, and came to the old rusty iron gate, between the brick walls which enclosed the parsonage garden.

He hoped to find his men already at work, but no one was there, for six had not yet struck by the cathedral clock; but it was June.

and the sun had been some time up, and the air was most fresh and sweet, and the birds all alive and busy, and the sun sparkling upon the dew drops with which the grass and herbs were bespangled.

He had all this beauty to himself; and he opened the iron gate and went into the garden, and spent the half-hour which elapsed before the workmen appeared in walking about, indulging the thick-coming memories which crowded upon him at every turn; here, there, and everywhere she was.

But when would she be back? and what would happen when she did come back? Aye, that future! what lay hidden in that future?

It was not to be penetrated; best not think of it. He dared not think of it; he would not think of it; he would think only of the present, and of the pleasure of transferring this desolate and overgrown garden into one that should be a perfect bower of bliss.

And now six o'clock rings out, and the men with their mattocks appear, and he sets them to

work; and takes a spade himself, and begins to labour upon one particular spot with his own hands. The spot is that one she used to call her own garden; her favourite bit of the whole. He would let no one work at that but himself; and at it he worked hard for two good hours, till eight o'clock rung on the cathedral bell, and the labourers began to lay down their spades and prepare for their breakfasts.

And then he remembered that there was another breakfast at nine o'clock, where he would be expected. So he laid down his spade most unwillingly; for, independently of the interesting associations, it was strange how he enjoyed the pleasant, wholesome occupation of turning up the soil; and telling the men that he should be there again in the afternoon, and charging them not to touch the plot on which he had been engaged, he resumed his coat, which was hanging upon a rose-bush, and walked home to the Deanery.

Refreshed by the influences of the sweet

morning air and the wholesome employment i which he had been engaged, he entered th breakfast-room with a countenance glowin with health, and looking, as all thought, mo particularly handsome.

CHAPTER VI.

His mother looked at her Philip with undisguised admiration, as he came into the room where the party were already seated at breakfast. The Dean could not help remarking, with inward complacency, how very fine a young man he was. Maria blushed and stirred her tea.

And Mr. Gorhambury?

We have lost sight of Mr. Gorhambury for a long time.

We left him shortly after the commission of a great crime, which he would not acknowledge to himself was any crime at all; and shortly

after the perpetration of an atrocious deed, which he would persist in representing to his conscience as perfectly justifiable.

How the conscience bore this, how that voice within—that deep mystery of a voice —*another's* voice! answered to this casuistry, let that face tell. Let those spirits tell.

Mr. Gorhambury has been, ever since the morning, upon which Lady Aylmer left the Castle, in the possession of everything which he coveted, or esteemed necessary to make life desirable.

Great wealth, luxury, and above all, consequence had been his — such consequence as the world will attach to extensive possessions in land, and an ancient castle for a dwelling-place.

He had the companionship of a wife, of whom he was justly proud, for all the world admired her talents and her graces. And he had a son, handsome and clever, whom every one liked, and spoke well of; and who, as times went, was a very good son to him.



A dark shadow was ever upon
complexion was sallow, he grev
thinner, his eyes were lustreless
tracted, his temper morose and u

Mr. Gorhambury never had b
man. Nobody liked him muc
a jealous, envious, discontente
know, always in secret com
with those better off than hi
upon the superior advantages t
a personal injury, and hungry
as a wolf, ready to devour
came in his way.

Miserable, wretched, thrice a
—whence?

From some vicious misconst

feeling, contracted in infancy, under in-
icious parents, or tyrannous servants, or
tal schoolmasters?

Whence—whence—

One hates this temper which can sympathize
h no one's happiness, and does not know
w to enjoy its own. One hates it so
ch, that one can scarcely even pity it; and
, what a hell on earth the possession of
s?

It seems hardly possible to imagine a con-
ion more utterly forlorn, than such a one.

In Mr. Gorhambury's intense selfishness, he
l been led from step to step, through a
rse of unnumbered and habitual mean-
ses, and petty wrong actions, springing
m this accursed coveting of the world's
alth. He had been led, as we have seen,
he found himself, as people in the course
life sometimes most suddenly and unex-
tedly do, upon the threshold of temptation,
commit a heavy crime.

Impunity flattered him, occasion favoured him, a certain fatal necessity seemed almost to excuse him.

Remember the day of small things.

In small things he had been habitually a sinner, in small things greedy, envious, unprincipled, unconscientious.

What he could not resist in little—was it possible he should resist in great? If the crime was greater, so was the temptation—the need more urgent, the desire more pressing.

He yielded, and from that day, adieu to the last faint gleam of happiness or peace.

Mr. Gorhambury was not altogether a hard, low, brutal, sinner; one of those who can enjoy a certain animal existence, when the life of the soul is fled.

He was not so bad, as, he was of an irritable temperament; he had too much brain—say too much heart to be able to exist in comfort in this deplorable state. He was a wretched man, and that is something to say for him.

No doubt too, the profession into which he, alas! unworthily had entered, added very greatly to his wretchedness.

It is a dreadful thing to be a priest in God's temple, with a heart given up to the world; to live in the presence of, and in the daily ministration of most holy things, with a darkened mind and sullied hands, and a heart craving after other bread—a bread which satisfieth not.

With so much leisure for discontented, ill-regulated thought—so much weariness over ill-executed duty, and all embittered by the secret comparison that will and must, be made, between the performance and the pattern!

I know no condition so deplorable as the union of a ghostly office and an earthly grovelling mind; nothing which so completely vitiates every feeling, turning all things to gall, or worse. Embittering, hardening, and defacing!

After Mr. Gorhambury's accession of fortune, it was observed that he almost entirely

abandoned his ministerial services. I have mentioned this before, and that it was the best sign he exhibited of something better still lingering about him. He was not so utterly abandoned of all feeling as to be able—carrying what he did written within—to come into the presence of his Creator, in those solemn offices.

For he was not, after all, entirely forsaken of all belief. Not so utterly abandoned as to have taken up his position with those, who, in the great controversy which Guizot says at present divides the world, deny God.

He was still among those who believe and tremble.

Obscurely, it is true—but he did believe—at least so far, that to mock God he dared not.

So he lived at Avon Castle very much retired, coming little to the town of G——, where alone he had any acquaintances he cared to cultivate, because he did not like to appear there; singular, when there, by abstaining from the performance of his professional

duties; yet, as his family was constituted, finding little comfort at home.

Mrs. Gorhambury had never loved him. She had scarcely pretended to love him; nay, rather, perhaps, took a certain pride in letting it be supposed that she had too much good taste ever to have been in love with such a man. She found abundance of amusement in carrying on her various pursuits, and her heart was filled with her son.

Philip had his own occupations and his own interests; was not very much at home, and when there, little with his father, though respectful, good-natured, and complying when they met.

Altogether, scarcely could a monk of La Trappe, lead a more solitary and melancholy life than did Mr. Gorhambury.

Quite alone—ever alone—abandoned to his own dull, dark, unsatisfactory meditations.

He had been persuaded, however, to come to the Deanery upon this occasion, and in spite

of his habitual depression of spirits, he seemed pleased with the intended alliance. He appeared also, rather to enjoy the good things at the Dean's table, for the Dean kept, as we have said, a really excellent *recherché* table, whereas that of Mr. Gorhambury, in spite of his man cook, was often rather negligently served, as will be the case, when the lady of the house is too æsthetical, and the gentleman too atrabilious to look after such things.

This is rather a long digression, but Mr. Gorhambury must not be quite forgotten. One must just glance aside to see how it fared with the man, who had sacrificed so much to secure his object, and had so completely succeeded in attaining it.

"How well you look, Philip, this morning, bright as the morning itself; you must have been up with the lark; and where has that errant spirit of yours carried you, I wonder," began the mother, in her satisfaction and good spirits.

"It's a fine morning," said the Dean. "I

two or three turns myself upon the ice, but I did not see you there."

"No—I've been a roaming—a roaming," said Philip, colouring a little, and sitting down by Maria.

"The fair Maria is never *matinale*, I think."

"It is a new feature in the *beau Phillipe's* character," she answered. "I wonder what could take him out so early? I heard the glass-door shut at five this morning; is it possible that could be you?"

The colour heightened a little, he looked vexed, and said:

"I did not esteem myself so honoured as to have a spy upon my actions."

"Why I could not help hearing the door shut, you know; and you ought to be very much flattered that I trouble my head about you, and not look vexed as you do now. You grow crosser and crosser, I declare; I really shall insist upon knowing where you were, Sir," she said, lowering her tone; "for I

begin to be growing suspicious,; you have such a conscious face. Now hasn't he, Mrs. Gorhambury? What can he have been about this morning?"

"Will you never have done," muttered Philip, angrily, and in a half-whisper, so that he could be distinctly heard only by herself. "What's the use of plaguing me, and turning the attention of the whole table upon me. Can't I take a six o'clock walk in the morning, but there must be all this to do?"

She was silenced—coloured, and turned away.

Then he began to be sensible how rudely and strangely he was behaving; besides, he caught the Dean's displeased eye fixed upon him, looking interrogatively, and at the same time as if dissatisfied.

His mother too, he felt rather than saw, was uncomfortable; he was ashamed of himself, and hastily endeavoured to make it up.

"Dear Maria! forgive me. You are the sweetest-tempered girl in the world. I am

amed to have tried you as I have too often
ie: forgive me, and do you wish to know
ere I have been, then?"

"Nay, I don't care," turning round with
adiant smiles, "I only was trying to plague
ou a little, I believe. Have you been out in
he fields?"

"Ye-es."

"Which way?"

"Oh! Parndon Birch way."

"And did you meet any one? and what did you see?" and then followed questions, such as those who have nothing to do, and little to think of, love to pour out in hopes of finding something from which they may obtain trifling excitement.

Which questions he parried in the best way he could, or answered by lying, without compunction, whenever he felt assured he could lie with impunity; for he who could practise deceit upon the scale he had suffered himself to do, was not likely to scruple backing it with a few, what he called *white lies*.

And so everybody was satisfied, and the morning passed pleasantly away, Philip devoting himself to Maria with more than common assiduity, as if he could thus make amends, for what he had been doing, and what he was about to do! for he had made up his mind, as soon as their ride should be over, and she had retired to her room, as she usually did, to rest for a couple of hours, to devote the time which was thus left at his disposal, and which he usually passed dawdling over the "Quarterly," or strolling upon the terrace, or making sketches with pen and ink, for he was too idle to get out his colours and set regularly to work; he had made up his mind to spend these two hours of liberty and leisure there, in the delightful and forbidden task of preparing the garden for that return, to which he looked forwards, with so much interest and emotion. To such inconsistency, to such wrong, was he alluring himself.

Down to the garden accordingly he went that afternoon, and the next morning, and the next

noon, and the next, and the next, filling the intervals of time with Maria, as if he uld compensate for his infidelity of heart by easing his apparent attentions. He was re patient with her, less rude, less exacting. e felt happier and happier every day, and e whole family circle seemed contented, little eaming of what was going on. And in this ndition things remain.

And week succeeded to week, but still the anderers did not return, and no tidings what-ver were heard of them. The garden round he parsonage was arranged in perfect order, ut the little plot he had taken under his own pecial care was a masterpiece. It was as eautiful as the choicest flowers, in the greatest bundance, could make such a spot.

Every one knows how easy it is, at such a time of the year, to produce a sudden effect, as by enchantment, and to make an Eden, blossoming like the rose.

He had also sent in some additional furniture to the house, greatly to the surprise of Betty,

who could not imagine how the circumstances of Mr. Lovel were so much improved; but she was very well pleased to arrange the luxurious couch for her master, and to put up the very pretty furniture, which she was told was intended for Miss Hernana's room.

It may seem strange that all this could be done without exciting attention at the Deanery; but it must be recollected that Mr. Lovel's parsonage lay at another point, and in an obscure corner of this considerable town, a region quite out of the way of the walks and drives of its more aristocratical inhabitants; and that nobody but himself was aware that the Lovels were expected home, for his father had lately resigned the living to another clergyman, and took no further interest about it.

Moreover, though Hernana and Maria were in a manner friends, no correspondence had taken place between them during this long absence, so that they had almost dropped out of each other's recollection.

Thus Philip was able to follow out his fancy

this imprudent manner, and to escape detec-
n; not the slightest suspicion of what was
ng on, reaching any one of the party at the
anery.

In the meantime, if flowers were being planted,
l preparations made in a certain obscure
se and garden, not the less were they going
elsewhere.

A house had been taken, about midway be-
en the city of G—— and Avon Castle, for
young couple; and Philip, whilst engaged
surreptitiously providing comforts for the
man he loved, had the particular pleasure of
ng incessantly consulted as regarded the fur-
ure and apartments, preparing, in so much
ury and abundance, for the one he did not
e.

He seemed to give a half careless, half vexed
ention to the subject, and would dismiss the
tters in question with a sort of anything-will-
manner, creditable to his philosophy, or sig-
icant of his indifference, as people chose to
ke it. Everybody chose to take it in the

more favourable light, and though they could have wished he would have taken a little more pleasure in what interested them all so much, yet they were content to put the best interpretation upon his behaviour.

The trinkets too came down—those trinkets that his mother had designed with so much taste, and which she now regarded with all an artist's pride and pleasure.

He had the heart to present them, and to see them received with sparkling eyes and blushes of intense pleasure, which he, evil-eyed as he was, attributed to a silly value for such trifles, despising her in his heart for it, and contrasting her to her disadvantage with another.

As men most cruelly and wilfully are apt to do in such cases, who not content with the wrong and the treachery of which they are guilty, suffer themselves to be constantly instituting comparisons, and that not only between one woman and another, but between the real, actual, living woman, with all her little infirmities and frailties, and the ideal they carry

their own bosoms; a comparison which not even the most faultless could stand.

And so day rolled over day, and Philip became more and more restless and uneasy, looking forwards with horror to his approaching wedding-day, yet too weak and irresolute to break it off; cherishing a sort of hope that Hernana would return, and that her return would produce some violent crisis, which would break the entanglement in which he found himself involved, and set him at liberty without effort of his own.

But she comes not—she comes not!

No! you must do it yourself; you must emancipate yourself; you must be courageous, candid, and sincere. No one can, or will, do it for you.

Cowardly, unmanly dissembler! your task shall not be done for you. That stronger character upon which you love to lean, that brave, truthful, generous creature, who inspired you with truth, courage and generosity, is no longer there to supply you with moral strength, to make you

faithful to your own heart, and sincere to the heart you have so deeply injured.

Think it not.

A few days, and your wedding is to be celebrated, and you still go on—on—on yielding yourself to what you please to think a fatal necessity; to what you please to call your destiny; half undecided still! not having, even yet, quite made up your mind whether after all it is not the best thing you can do, like other weak characters, yielding yourself up under this sophistry to what you in your conscience know and feel is *not* for the best.

If she would but return! Something would happen to set all right—why will she not come back?—what detains her?—what a cursed fate pursues him, that she comes not back?

Oh!

But I hear the jingling sound of a post-chaise, don't I?

Yes!

And in it are two travellers—

A man worn with sickness, and a tall, thin

girl; worn, but not weakened, by toil and travel.

And the carriage stops at the iron gate of the old parsonage.

CHAPTER VII.

MANY a weary day and hour, many a wearisome tedious month; two entire years of sorrow, anxiety, and toil, had that fine creature passed through since she had left England with her father.

She quitted it, as we know, with her heart ill at ease, her anxieties and cares, embittered by that recollection of days past and gone, which ought to have proved a cordial to have sweetened all, but was now her heaviest burden. His inconsistent and unkind conduct; the recollection of those moments when it was impossible to doubt

his attachment, combined with his cruel sertion, produced those alternations of hope d fear, of doubt and certainty, ending at last the acutest form of pain and sorrow, the human art is called upon to bear.

Cruel, cruel infliction! deep, unutterable suf-ring, to which so many men, unheeding what ey do, expose so many women by their want constancy of heart, and stability of purpose; d that honourable principle which forbids the pression of infectious tenderness, stealing away e trusting woman's heart, till fixity of purpose there.

Never was victim less deserving her fate, an this victim of inconstancy had been.

Her's was no weak, excitable, romantic tem-r, easily led to spin a serious love story upon few soft words, too readily surrendering her fections at the first summons.

Everything that man can do, short of that eclaration which seals his fate, Philip Gorham-ury had done, and done seriously.

It was here, as it has been in many another

equally lamentable case, the man was no dissembler—the passion he allowed himself to show was sincere at the moment—it was fidelity, constancy, honourable resolution which were wanting, not genuine love. Philip had felt as warmly as she believed he did.

It had been a trying, sorrowful journey. Her father's continued illness; the difficulty of providing funds for present needs; the cruel uncertainty for the future as regarded him, for of herself she thought little; the increasing melancholy of Lady Aylmer, as year rolled away after year, and yet no claimant appeared for the little glove, clouded everything.

And all fell heavily upon this moral heroine. With such things she could struggle bravely; difficulty, danger, privation, she could undergo, and her courage never fail; but, oh! the enervating effects of happiness once enjoyed! the yearning after happiness, just held, as it were,

beyond her grasp, yet ever tantalizing and in view; the intense longing after the presence of one, alas! so far away. Were it but one look! one word! The struggle with such feelings is, indeed, a hard thing.

But she had borne *that*, as she had borne all. Native courage, and that strength which was not her own strength, had carried her through; and she returned home, toil-worn, and thin, and pale of cheek, it is true, like one who has been desperately struggling with pain and difficulty; but the bright lustre of her eye still unimpaired, for the light of the invincible spirit was shining there, and her health uninjured. Patience and fortitude, and, above all, resignation to the Great Will—more wise than her will—added to strenuous exertion for the sake of others, had carried her through it all, and she had been spared frightful evils incident to derangement of the nerves, when the struggle is too hard for the character.

Mr. Lovel's leave of absence had expired, and it had become necessary, if he did not

intend altogether to give up his curacy, that he should return home. Now, to return home was what Hernana dreaded above all things. Whilst living in different scenes, surrounded by new objects, and the too tender recollections of the past unawakened by association, she found she was able to get along pretty well; but she very much dreaded the returning to G——, and exposing herself to all that pre-occupation, nervous harassing, and alternation of thought and feelings, which renewed propinquity with Philip Gorhambury was sure to occasion.

The future seemed to her to present nothing but a scene of wretched perplexity. One way, alone, there was of solving all difficulty, and restoring her to that peace of mind, for which she had striven so courageously, and whilst abroad, attained, but which she now felt too sure must leave her; and this was the realisation of a hope, now almost abandoned, that Philip would, after all, prove true.

But this hope was faint indeed to compensate for other things. She was of an imaginative

per, and her residence abroad had accus-
med her to the enjoyment of the beautiful,
d of elegances and comforts which in Eng-
nd seem reserved for the affluent alone. Her
anty resources she well knew would forbid any
dulgences of this nature now. Daily bread
as all she must expect; little or nothing to
dorn life could be her portion.

This may seem a small grievance, but it seemed to throw a somewhat darker gloom upon the prospect; for Hernana was mortal, young, formed for enjoyment, and a woman.

This day's journey has been more than usually melancholy. Her father felt worse, more low, helpless, and suffering, than usual; and Lady Aylmer was no longer with him, she having parted from them a few days before, proposing to return by a different route.

Hernana is very weary, too; extremely tired with a long, shaking journey over bad roads, in a jingling hack-chaise; and the future and the present alike seem covered with a black veil; but she strives to conceal her sadness, and endeavours to cheer and amuse her father.

And in this temper, fighting with herself, and endeavouring vainly to raise her sinking spirits, she is driven through the well-known streets of this part of the town, which to her looks more gloomy and filthy, and more abounding with squalid and miserable figures, than ever; until at last the chaise turns into the sort of open, neglected space, of which the wall of the parsonage garden forms one side, and stops in front of the iron gate.

One pleasant face at least there is to welcome the travellers home. Old Betty, with her honest countenance beaming with pleasure, is there. The welcome she gives is so warm and hearty as to be in itself a cordial. This cheered her a little: and with

ing spirits she assists her father to descend om the chaise, and he placing his arm in hers, ey enter the garden together.

Garden indeed! It merited the name ow.

The sun was bright, for it was a lovely after- oon, and shone upon all this profusion of gay olours and pleasant forms which surrounded her on every side.

Turfs rolled and watered green and smooth, a gravel walk neatly trimmed, and all around upon every side, beds of flowers, knots of flowers, pyramids of flowers, and all framed in a wall of green plantations.

The grey peaked roofs of the old parsonage house, presented themselves, looking venerable but cheery, like bright old age, from amid the bowers of jessamine, clematis, and fruit trees, that were trained all about and round the old casement windows, glittering like diamonds in the sun!

It really was a beautiful scene. Picturesque, and with a certain wildness, yet rich in colour,

and ordered with symmetry, such as a garden should be.

She looked round, she could scarcely believe her eyes! It was as if she was in a dream.

"Child! child! what hast thou been doing?" was all that Mr. Lovel could say.

And this recalled her to herself; and she began to tremble in her heart, and to look at old Betty, and to fear her orders had been misunderstood, and that this charming scene would prove but the prelude to new money embarrassments. She looked at the old woman and said:

"Betty! Dear good Betty! I am afra you sadly misunderstood my orders. W *have* you been doing?"

"Why, bless your heart! You don't t as how it's *I*, as has been doing all things?" said Betty, grinning with delight

But it is a short way along that gravel and now, they are at the house doo through the pretty antique porch, and little lobby, and in the little parlour, a

and garnished, and neatly painted and papered; and among the old chairs and tables, not one of which had been removed, stands a luxurious couch, suited for an invalid, and the prettiest chair and work-table that ever was seen or occupied by an industrious young lady.

She could not speak for surprise.

Sensations most overpowering were coming over her, as Betty, proud and happy, in a nice new dress, which she had put on that evening for the first time, thus proceeded:

"It's all of a piece!—all of a piece; and I do hopes as how you like it.

"My dear woman," began Mr. Lovel, now becoming seriously uneasy, "you must have been mad! Who is to pay for all these fine things?"

"Why them as sent 'em in, to be sure; and that's not me, you may rest certain. And neither need you bother yourself anyhow about it; for him as sent 'em in has a good right to do so, or I'm mistaken—as good a right, as a son as is to be, has to take care of a

father as is to be. And you need not go for to guess who that same may be; I see by Miss Hernana's eyes *she* needn't, at least; for it's neither more nor less than Mr. Philip Gorhambury, who used to be so sweet upon her, afore she went away."

She had guessed the truth, as old Betty said; but this sudden confirmation sent her to the window—and there she stood, and lifted up her eyes to Heaven, in one short, fervent thanksgiving of inexpressible joy.

I know no feeling like it—when one who has long suffered, and must know that the suffering has not, in one sense at least, been deserved; who may perhaps have found it sometimes hard to reconcile with their faith in the justice and mercy of God, this severe discipline of confirmed pain—suddenly feel themselves repaid, and bathed in a torrent of unexpected joy! of happiness, such as, even in fancy, they had not dared to imagine! and now it is realised, and their own!

The swelling of the heart—the expansion

upwards—the deep immeasurable gratitude! She had taught herself to believe him inconstant and unkind, to command herself to forget him, and with him, to abandon all that life offered of happiness; and she finds him here, occupied with her enjoyments, with her father's comforts, entering into, the most trifling detail; for everything around her only offered fresh proofs of his watchful love and care.

She stood at the window, the casement of which was open, and her eyes were lifted in one brief, rapturous ejaculation of thankfulness. And he—where was he? Why, standing at that very iron gate, looking in upon, and watching her.

He had seen her get out of the chaise—oh! with what a beating heart—and followed her with his eyes up the little walk, and had divined the rest. And now he was gazing at her, as there she stood; the splendour of her beauty, it is true, dimmed and faded—but still with that look! which had ever

been, to his fond eyes, more precious than it all!

He could resist no longer. He flung open the wicket, crossed the garden in three strides, and entering the house, presented himself there, standing in the parlour doorway.

Mr. Lovel uttered a faint exclamation of surprise, upon which she turned, and they were in each other's arms.

There was need of no further declaration.

The whole was told. Yet, what was there to tell? It was but the confession of what had upon both sides so long been understood.

He clasped her to his bosom with intense feeling, and she laid her head against his breast and wept.

Yes, those tears! blessed, blessed sweet tears —how long! how wearily long since she had shed such tears! She had denied herself the relief of tears in her sorrow. Now they burst

forth like waters through a broken barrier, in one overwhelming flood of joy.

So they stood together in that little room—he clasping her to his breast, whispering inarticulate words of endearment. She, weeping—weeping as if dissolved in tears.

But it was not very long that they indulged their feelings thus. Mr. Lovel required attention, and must be put to rest after his long journey, and rapture must abate and give way to the urgency of duty.

He assisted as of old to carry her father up stairs; and then when he saw her occupied in the necessary business of unpacking his clothes, and preparing the bed, he recollected that it was time for him to go away.

So exchanging the holy kiss of affianced lovers, though not one syllable, but his few incoherent ejaculations had escaped him, they parted.

He went forth through the little gate in a state of insane joy, that approached to madness. She busied herself about her father's comforts with all that is exquisite in woman's feelings, nestling in her heart.

What an hour of rapture followed, when duty done, she was left alone.

When silently she stood at the casement window of the little parlour, and looked up into the measureless, spangled depths, feeling as if her soul must penetrate the infinite, and carry its humble incense of gratitude to him who had given her a heart capable of such joy, of such measureless joy!

She found it impossible to rest.

Sometimes she walked up and down the little room, on every side of which the hand of his love was visible; then she strolled about the garden, and never wearied of gazing upon the flowers he had planted, now with bend

ads and closed leaves shining so sweetly in e moonbeams.

She could have stooped down and kissed ery tiny petal. She could have been capable any extravagance in the infinity of her pture, yet she played none of these fond olish freaks. The whole was so real, so eighty! Glad, sober certainty!

Well, well, let us leave her.

Let us leave her happy — happy beyond expression! almost wishing that it had pleased Heaven so to take her; and that when her lover returned in the morning, he might have found her dead.

But not so.

Not so, are we to be dismissed. Not till the task, the heavy task is finished! The part played out.

Not to enjoy, but to suffer, are the martyrs sent here.

Brief is happiness—sorrow weary and long.

Such spirits have not their resting-place here! What should they do in such a world

as this? A world of deception, inconstancy and wrong! Go away, go away, poor Hernana! Take your flight before the morrow comes.

Not so. You must abide your fate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY dined at the Deanery at half-past six o'clock, punctually. It was the rule and fashion of the house to be punctual as the clock, which never went wrong in this well-ordered family. The Dean loved arrangement and punctuality—there was a gravity, dignity, and propriety in it, which well became the man and the station he occupied.

The party had assembled in the dining-room, as the custom was, about ten minutes before the second bell rang, and everybody was in their places except one.

Philip Gorhambury did not appear.

"What can make Philip so late?" Mrs. Gorhambury kept repeating, vexed at this want of good manners; and surprised also, for her son was not one wantonly to commit a breach of respect of this sort, to any one, far less to one he honoured as he did the Dean.

"Will you excuse me?" she at last said, as she saw the finger upon the dial of the chimney clock, rapidly approaching the figure marking the half hour. "I think I will step up to Philip; something must be the matter, or he would never be so rude, and ill-bred."

She accordingly left the room, and went up to her son's apartment. It was empty.

His servant had laid out the dress for that evening; everything was prepared and in exact order, but the cage was empty.

Mrs. Gorhambury rang the bell.

"Jervis," as the most fine and fashionable of valets appeared. "What is become of your master?"

"He has not come in, Madam."

"I know he has not come in—you need not inform me of that," said Mrs. Gorhambury, impatiently, "but can you tell me anything about him? why he has not come in? So late as it is! and where he can be?"

"I beg your pardon, Madam; how should I be likely to know?"

"Likely or not likely, I am convinced, by your manner, that you *do* know, and I desire to be made acquainted, immediately, with all you are able to tell."

"Indeed, Madam, I have not the remotest reason upon earth to know where Mr. Philip is, I assure you so upon my word, Madam."

"You may have no reason to know, but you *do* know, and I desire you will inform me."

"I beg your pardon, Madam; but really this is something hard upon a man. How should I be acquainted with Mr. Philip Gor-

hambury's proceedings? which, to confess the truth, are often so eccentric as to defy calculation."

"Eccentric! are they? I was not aware of that circumstance. How eccentric? I expect you to explain yourself, Jervis, and to do it without delay, or attempt at disguise. How are your master's movements eccentric? and what do you know of their eccentricity?"

"Indeed, Madam, you puzzle me greatly. I beg your pardon, but in my opinion, humbly taking leave to express so much before you, Madam; men are upon honour in cases like these, and it does not become one young man to betray another. We are all fallible."

"Was there ever such a puppy?" thought Mrs. Gorhambury, angrily; but the coxcombry of the valet, and the tone it pleased that supremely fine gentleman to take, reminded her of her own dignity; she checked the voice of anger with which she was about to speak, and said coldly:

"I am not accustomed to have my orders

disputed by servants. I repeat it: I desire to know, and that instantly, everything with which you may be acquainted, that can explain my son's absence at such an hour as this. What did you mean, by calling your master's movements eccentric?"

Mrs. Gorhambury was well known to be a woman of resolution, and the valet understood that her word was law in her own family, and her son would certainly discharge him upon the instant if pressed to do it by his mother; so, assuming an air of profound respect, to which he endeavoured to give colour of melancholy regret, he said:

"Eccentric, Madam, perhaps, I ought not to say; for most young men, I fear, are open to severe reproaches of this present nature. I am afraid if Mrs. Gorhambury were to ask her son how he employed the hours between six and eight, which he steals from sleep every morning, she would not get a very satisfactory answer. Not that I apprehend any very

serious misconduct upon the part of Mr. Philip—but there is a mystery about the affair —and it is seldom that what a man can altogether justify, he hides under a mystery."

"Explain yourself at once! Speak out!"

"I hope I may be excused, indeed, Madam."

"Do you forget altogether what you are, and in what relation you stand to me, that you dare thus insolently to disobey my commands?" cried Mrs. Gorhambury, losing all patience at last. "Speak out! How has my son been passing those two hours you mention? I did not even know he was accustomed to leave his room!"

"Innocently, Madam! innocently, I would pledge my word; but yet in a manner to make his best friends uneasy. In short, in gardening."

"Gardening! What *can* you mean? Gardening! What signification can such an innocent way of employing his morning hours as that have? though I confess it is a humour

which I had not suspected him of. But any exercise of fancy is natural to his mind."

"The significance of the matter, Madam, if I may take leave to say so, lies in the place where a man gardens."

"The place where he gardens! Where, but here?"

"Anywhere but here."

"Speak out! speak out! What terrible, terrible thing do you presume to insinuate? Garden! where? Tell me at once, where?"

"The old Parsonage-house, Mrs. Gorhambury may perhaps remember, has a pretty large garden. It had got very much out of order whilst poor Mr. Lovel was absent; and indeed, too, I had the curiosity one day to walk in that direction, merely to look about me and at the old place, of which I had heard a good deal of talk since I had the honour to enter Mr. Philip's service. The garden was sadly out of order; and perhaps it was mere good nature upon the part of Mr. Philip, which led him, so soon as it was known that the family were

coming home, to give directions to have it all put to rights, and planted with the most beautiful and expensive shrubs, flowers, &c., that could be found; and, indeed, to take a spade himself now and then."

All the blood in Mrs. Gorhambury's veins seemed suddenly to freeze at this intelligence. She turned very pale, and was going to speak again, when the last dinner-bell rang. Go down she must, and make what apologies she could invent. She turned hastily to the dressing table, swallowed a tumbler of water, and saying, "Let me know as soon as your master comes in," hastened down stairs.

Her countenance was so disturbed, so *boule-versée*, as the French say, when she entered the room, that everybody was struck by it.

"Nothing seriously the matter, I hope," said the Dean, as he rose to give his arm and conduct her into the dining-room.

"Oh, nothing! nothing! Only I am vexed to have kept you all waiting. Philip had, I recollect, some business in the town, which probably

s delayed him. He is not usually un-
nctual; so I trust to your indulgence to
rgive this breach of rules, and to allow him
have a little dinner in the library when he
mes back."

And so she got through it as well as she
uld; but it was impossible for her so com-
tely to disguise her uneasiness as to escape
servation. The Dean looked grave; Lady
aria curious; Maria half-vexed, half-grieved.
r. Gorhambury, alone unmoved, ate his dinner
silence, as usual.

It was nine o'clock before Philip Gorham-
ry returned. He entered by the back door,
oke to no one; but going hastily up the
rvants' stairs, made his way to his own
om. He found his mother there, waiting
r him.

He came in, his face flushed, his hair in
sorder, his eyes passionate and bloodshot.
Worried, feverish, excited, thus he burst into

the room, making as if he would lock himself in; when, behold! his mother sitting there by the window, waiting for him. He stood as if turned to stone before her, neither advancing nor endeavouring to retreat.

"Philip!" she said, with grave solemnity, and in a voice which Siddons might have used upon such an occasion: "what am I to think of this strange behaviour?"

Her voice seemed to dissolve the first intensity of dismay, which had as it were almost turned him to marble; and approaching her, he said, indignantly:

"Mother! why do I find you here? Watching? spying?"

"Why do you find me here? Because I am your mother; and it is my post and my duty to watch—to spy, if you must have it so—when I am agitated with the utmost astonishment and distress by what I have, too late, learned. I fear my son is forgetting that he is, or ought to be, a man of honour!"

"Honour! honour! honour!" he cried

omewhat wildly. "Forgetting! True! too rue! But when, when did that forgetting egin?"

"I know not when it *begun*—it is enough hat the breach exists, or, rather, has existed—or I trust at my remonstrance, Philip, there will e an end put at once to the romantic, and orse than romantic nonsense, in which, I fear, ou have been indulging."

"Oh! oh!" he cried "an end!—yes—yes —yes! There will be an end," and he gathered nd crushed himself together as a man does n the anticipation of some ecstatic joy.

His mother stared at him for some moments —what did he mean? what could he mean by hose incoherent ejaculations?

Philip you are an enigma to me," at last she said, coldly; "but I am not going to be equally incomprehensible to you. To speak plainly, I have heard of the way you have been spending two hours every morning, when all the world thought you were in your bed; and of the absurd and romantic fancy for putting that large, ram-

bling garden at the old house into apple-pie
order—I do not mean to quarrel with you for
this way of spending your money, or that way
of spending your money, your father allows you
enough to justify any extravagance or folly—
but I *do* wonder—circumstances being as they
are, and circumstances having been as they have
been—that you had not the common prudence
and delicacy to refrain from indulging a whim
—at any other time innocent enough—and I
insist upon it, and exact it as a proof of you
duty and obedience, that henceforward there
an end made to this nonsense; and that y
give me your word of honour never to
near that odious Parsonage, and its gar
again."

He had stood there bolt upright before
whilst she made this speech, moving n
limb nor feature—at its conclusion a bitter
passed over his lips as he said:

"And you think I shall give y
promise?"

"I do think you will give it me, fo

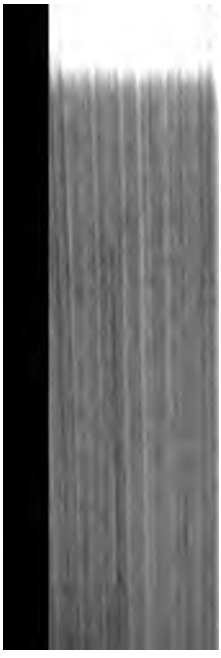
upon your duty as a son. Philip! what range demon possesses you?"

"Ay, that's the word. You've hit it at last. demon! Yes, a strange demon—a posses- n! yes, a possession; but one, not all the wers in heaven or hell can cast out. You, rhaps, see a madman before you, mother. I n't know well whether I am mad, or dream- g, or awake; but this I do know, that the aniac in the Scripture was not stronger than I rend his fetters, and thus I tear my bonds under," making a motion as if rending him- lf free. "Mother, I love Hernana Lovel. I ve pledged my faith to her this night, other! Her tears are still upon my bosom. he loves me! and we are bound for ever."

She started up from her chair with a kindling e and a gesture of rage, as if she would have wn at him as he uttered the hated name.

"Say that again! say that again!" she cried, dare to say that again—and if—if—if—Oh! o not make me curse you."

"I do say it again—I dare say it again—I



you should love such a wretch

She flew upon his arm; she
as a she tiger-cat might have
rendered her speechless. She
with violence, as if to stop th
which he continued to pour fo
sport, to exasperate her to mad

"You think, perhaps, I da
That weak, selfish, interested,
traitor to love, to my own hear
ing myself to be influenced
led by suggestions, equally
temptible!—that I am a cow
a weak and selfish wretch, an
avow it. I tell you, no—n
be quiet. Why do you loo

Would you, if you could, keep me as you have made me, a traitor to my own heart and to her? Mother—mother—let me go."

She did so, and sank breathless back upon her chair. Speechless still, but her eyes glaring upon him with a rage and agony indescribable. She gasped several times, at last she sighed deeply, and recovering breath and voice, she said in a hollow tone:

"Who is it talking to me of honour?"

"I am, mother—of my love."

"Your *love!*"

"And of my honour."

"Your *honour!*"

"Yes, of what I owe to my first love; my old unstained honour. Oh, cursed be this house, and cursed be the hour I entered it," he said, gnashing his teeth and looking round with a ghastly expression of rage and hatred, "for here I was betrayed into being a traitor to both, and cursed!—"

"Spare your curses, Sir," said Mrs. Gorhambury, "and spare your accusations if you

please. Betrayed! By whom were you betrayed? What force was put upon your inclinations? What fetters imposed upon your will? Were you not free to choose—to take or to leave? Who betrayed you but yourself, I should be glad to know?"

"You did—my mother did. Can you deny it? Did you leave any means untried to influence me?

"And if I did! pray was I to be debarred the exercise of my judgment? Was I to be denied the liberty of performing what I thought a sacred duty? Most true! I did deprecate, and I *do* deprecate this romantic flinging away of yourself and all your prospects in life to dedicate it to the fond foolish idolatry of a common-place, half-educated girl! a mere whim that took its rise among the accidents of childhood. True, I *did* do my best to persuade you to an honourable rational alliance, in which I was confident you would find respectability and happiness. True, I did make what efforts I could; but whose fault is it, pray, if those

efforts succeeded? Why did they succeed? But because all I said and urged found a response within; and your own heart told you, when I pointed it out, that there lay your true well-being. If you had made such a mighty fuss about your heart then, as you are pleased to be making to-night, believe me I would never have asked you to pay your addresses to Maria Westmore, because I should have thought you unworthy of her."

His head sank upon his breast during this speech. When his mother ceased, which she did with an accent of bitter contempt, he remained silent for a considerable time, whilst she sat watching him. Gradually the clouds of shame and self-reproach cleared away from his countenance. He raised his head—his face had recovered something of its wonted expression, as he said:

"I have been to blame; but you, mother, are the last who ought to reproach me. For through my whole life have you not been instilling one or other of these worldly-wise

maxims into my mind. I was too worldly-wise, I confess it; but here, I abjure such baseness for ever. I will live to mine own heart. I love Hernana Lovel, and Hernana Lovel I intend to make my wife."

Again she started up with a passionate gesture, then she checked herself, and sat down again.

"Doubtless the merits of the young lady afford sufficient excuse for a resolution such as this, compounded of folly and treachery."

"If I thought there were either folly or treachery in it, do you suppose for a moment I would make it?"

"Oh, no! I beg your pardon; I thought there was something that looked very like both, in such conduct upon the part of a gentleman who was on the eve of marriage to another young lady. A match, most unexceptionable in every way, with a girl whose position in life, birth, beauty, and temper, had left her friends to suppose that she merited very different treatment in exchange for a heart that few

men would not have been proud to have won."

"Heart! heart! aye, there it is. I never wanted her heart. I never asked for her heart —a school-girl's heart! Given away because the pretty fools cannot live without their lovers. Mother, mother! I know the value well enough of a young lady's first passion. It will do her no very great harm to have it disappointed— teach her a little of the world—teach her that women to be interesting, must be self-governed —not ready to throw themselves at the head of the first pretty fellow they can have a romance with. Mother, don't talk in this way, if you would not have me hate Maria. It is this—this more than all that drives me from her. Mother, mother! be rational in your turn! can you not *see*—will you not *see* that I don't like her—that she cannot please me— cannot interest me; and yet she is well enough —a good pretty girl! but oh! how unlike—"

"And so you will very quietly go and ruin the prospects, and break the heart of the

woman you had engaged yourself to marry next week—next Thursday, if I recollect right. Am I to go down and tell the Dean this?"

"Tell him anything. Say what you will. Dear, good mother! make the best of it you can."

"I, make the best of it!—I go down and tell this disgraceful tale! Oh no, Sir. Go down and tell it yourself, if told it must be."

The fervour of his feelings had in some degree calmed during this mortifying conversation; but his resolution had not in the least abated.

"I see," he said, with sadness. "I see I have behaved extremely ill. I am unjust and barbarous to Maria; this is indeed a base return to make for the poor girl's affection, for I really believe she loves me. But what can I do? Is it my fault that my heart absolutely refuses to love in return? Is it my fault that there is another—oh, that other!—unparalleled, who loves me too. Yes, mother, and who has loved me through sorrow and toil, ever since

she was a child, and I a child. Is not this a more sacred affection? Must I sacrifice a being like that to a poor foolish little thing, who will love some other just as well in a twelvemonth, depend upon it. No, my resolution is not to be shaken. How best to get out of this difficulty, I know not, and I see you have not the kindness to help me; but do not flatter yourself that you will be able to persuade me to that, which I now feel to be equally base and impossible."

Mrs. Gorhambury had grown calmer as well as her son. She considered a little before she spoke again.

"What do you intend to do to-night, then? Come down and show your face in the drawing-room?—your hangman's face, I could almost call it."

"Mother, mother! no. I do *not* intend to show my hangman's face in the drawing-room to-night. Say I have a bad head-ache. Excuse me as you can; I shall go to bed."

"And to-morrow!"

"Oh! to-morrow shall be a day of restitution. We will all be put into our right places to-morrow."

"Be it so," said Mrs. Gorhambury, with a strange smile. "I conclude you will have too much regard for Miss Lovel's reputation to visit her to-morrow; really, Philip, if you have no consideration for the poor young woman, I have."

"Be under no apprehensions upon the *poor young woman's* account, as you please to style her. I will take care of the honour and reputation of Hernana Lovel, rely upon that," he said, with a proud offended air.

"Promise me one thing, at least."

"I will promise nothing, except that all things shall be restored to their proper places to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX.

Ah! that to-morrow it is come.

It came up a fresh, sweet, shining morning; and the dew lay sparkling upon those flowers which he had planted, and the sun cast long shadows from the shrubs with which he had adorned the little spot.

She had passed a sleepless night, a sleepless night of happiness almost too great to be endured; and she had risen early, for she yearned to be in that garden again—again gazing upon those proofs of his affection which surrounded her—those proofs of his tenderness, truth, and constancy.

She had softly opened her father's door, paying him, as was her custom, the first duty of the day. She found him still sleeping, and with a tranquillity that proved how happy he felt himself, to be restored to his home.

So she quietly closed the door again, and then slid down the stairs, opening the house-door with precaution, and stepped forth.

She had her light summer morning dress on, which had something of a foreign cut and air, and was particularly suited to her face and figure, and over her head she had drawn a large white muslin shawl, in the guise of a mantilla. Thus dressed, in spite of her worn and fatigued features, the paleness of her cheek, and the somewhat dimmed lustre of her eyes, she looked eminently beautiful, and of the finest character of beauty; indeed her appearance had greatly improved by the two years spent in foreign travel, and there was that look, we call distinguished about her, which so greatly enhances personal charms.

The air of the morning, so fresh and sweet,

called up a slight colour into her cheek; and that expression too was there—that look ineffable, which love—confiding, happy love—and that alone gives to a woman's countenance. A charm one can scarcely define—one knows not well where, or in what it lies, but there is no charm like it.

She wandered about the garden—now here, now there, now bending over a rose-tree, one blush of blossoms, or examining the splendid geraniums and carnations in the little parterres; then she gathered a sprig of flowering myrtle—her favourite of all—for it reminded her of Nice and the Mediterranean; and was moreover, in her opinion, as in mine, the sweetest and most charming of flowers.

And thus she was engaged, when she heard the garden gate open, and as she turned round to see who could be coming at so early an hour, Philip Gorhambury entered.

The Cathedral clock was just then going seven.

He came up to her hastily, and with a

certain agitation and impatience in his manner; yet there was joy upon his features, to find her there and alone, though his cheek was faded, his eye disturbed, and his voice hurried and faltering.

She did not take alarm at this, for him, unusually excited manner: she saw in it only a fresh proof of the influence of feelings so precious to her. And she met him with a confiding smile of affection, which she no longer endeavoured to disguise.

"My precious darling!" he began, "you are up early, after so long a journey. I wished, and yet I scarcely hoped to find you stirring."

"I could not sleep very well last night, Philip!—you will not wonder at that. It was such an unexpected rush of joy—so sudden! For I had almost made up my mind, or rather, I had been long, long struggling to persuade my heart, that you had forgotten me; and that if I ever had been anything to you, you cared for me no longer. I had no

right, perhaps, to reproach you, for no pledge of mine did you hold; and yet my heart *would* reproach you Philip."

"You thought you had a claim upon me," he cried hastily. "You were right, you *had* a claim—a prior claim—a prior and indefeasible claim!"

"I never went so far as that; I thought you at perfect liberty to do as you pleased; and yet, I don't know whether that is quite the truth, neither—but all that is over now, let us think no more of it."

And he seemed also inclined to shut out the past, and would fain, like her, have thought no more of it—*that* was impossible; but he had at least the satisfaction of having made up his mind as to the future. He had abundance of courage and resolution; he knew there would be much that was most painful and disagreeable to be gone through, but he was prepared to go through with it, and once over, there would be an end to it for ever. Thus having made up his mind, he

yielded to the sweet influences of the present, and succeeded in dismissing painful reflections.

They walked up and down, and round and round the little secluded spot. Never weary, as lovers never are, and forgetful of time; and they had thus loitered away for about an hour—Hernana, in a state of felicity which defies description, and he, as happy—and a great deal more happy than he had any right to be — when again, the latch of the little iron gate was heard to move, and some one to enter the garden.

They had their backs to the entrance, and were slowly sauntering together, side by side, up the little gravel walk; but hearing the gate open, they both turned, and beheld Mrs. Gorhambury!

A feeling of inexpressible delight gladdened the eyes of Hernana.

His mother! Was it possible? His mother! come to greet her so early; how unexpected—how kind! She stepped for-

ward, her face all beaming with joy, to give welcome to Philip's mother.

But Philip turned pale, trembled, and stood still.

Mrs. Gorhambury advanced slowly up the path. She was a little heated, and out of breath, for she had walked all the way from the Deanery. Finding her son already gone out, she had immediately set forward to follow him, resolved, without further delay, to bring matters to a crisis.

The bright, loving, happy face with which Hernana came forward to greet her, might have made many another woman, if not falter in her purpose, at least regret its necessity; but Mrs. Gorhambury's jaundiced eye only read an insolent exultation and triumph in this glow of purest joy and gratitude. Thus the very aspect which might have softened the heart of another, only served still more to incense hers. Rejecting the offered hand held out so gladly to welcome her, she coldly said:

"If you are at leisure, Miss Lovel, I would

beg a few moments' conversation with you. And you, young man, it would be well for you to be present."

Hernana was struck speechless with surprise at this unexpected reception. Her colour rose, and she looked at Philip for explanation; but he stood there, his face working with such strange and violent alternations of feeling, that a glance at it only added to her terror and perplexity.

"Nay, Sir," said Mrs. Gorhambury, answering to that expression of face, though Philip had as yet neither moved nor spoken "that enraged countenance ill becomes you. You know that I am only about to do that which, if there had been the slightest spark of honour left in your bosom, it never would have been left for me to do; namely, to explain to this young person here, your true situation."

Hernana, with a face from which all colour had by this time fled, could only stand there glancing in amazement from mother to son.

Something, something terrible, was at hand.

She could read that in the aspect of both. She was so terror-struck, so confounded, that at the moment she could do nothing but strive to summon up fortitude and self-command to meet the awful, yet incomprehensible blow, which she felt was impending.

She stood trembling with agitation, but struggling to gather up her courage.

"This garden," Mrs. Gorhambury went on, looking round, and with a coolness which, to her son's excited imagination, appeared almost satanic, "this garden is not a place for explanations. Is Mr. Lovel up? I should hope not. I should be sorry to disturb him. Can we go into the house, and have a few words of conversation by ourselves?"

"My father has not left his room, but the house is small, and strange voices might surprise him. There is the little summer-house, at the top of the garden," faltered Hernana, "perhaps that might do."

"Anywhere, so I can speak to you without being overheard. I shall not detain you long.

Philip! Nay, do not steal away; I want you to be present, when I open my business to Miss Lovel."

"Barbarous!" he cried. Then to Hernana: "Yes, let us go to the little summer-house, my love; there will be a few excited moments to go through, best not risk disturbing your father. Yes, mother, I follow; but, if you think to alter my resolution, by this or by any other proceeding you may please to adopt, you will find yourself mistaken."

"I do not expect to alter your resolution; I do not care for your resolution. Miss Lovel"—they were now entering the summer-house—"Miss Lovel, I address myself to you, and to you alone. Sit down," seating herself as she spoke, "what I have to say is from no impulse of passion. I am not going to utter a few angry words of reproach and remonstrance. All I have to do is to ask a few plain questions, state a few plain facts, and Miss Lovel must draw her own inference as to what she ought to do."

Hernana seated herself in silence. Philip leaned gloomily against the wall.

Mrs. Gorhambury went on.

"The question I would ask is simply this. Did that young gentleman, or did he not, think proper to inform the young lady who has accepted from him, not only all these testimonies of regard that I see around me, but a declaration, if I mistake not, that, as she considers it, can lead to but one result? Did that young gentleman, or did he not, inform her, that he had, for the last six months, been paying his addresses to another woman; and that Thursday in next week, just five days from this, is appointed for his wedding day?"

She started up as if she had been shot.

Her eyes staring as if all sense had suddenly left them, glaring upon Philip, to whom she approached with stretched-out arms, as if she would have taken shelter on his bosom. She had evidently, for the moment, lost her senses.

"Mother! what have you done?" he cried

fiercely; and he caught the poor bewildered creature in his arms, and clasped her to his breast, crying out: "Hernana! my Hernana! recollect yourself—come to yourself again."

She looked up in his face with those staring eyes, from which all reason had fled; but as he kept pressing her to his breast, with the fondest caresses, the spasm on life and reason gradually melted away, and bursting into tears as she stood there clasped in his arms, and her head supported on his shoulder, she looked up in his face and said:

"What were they saying, my Philip?"

Mrs. Gorhambury was rising to speak, but her son made a gesture so imperious, commanding her to be silent, that it was impossible not to obey.

"Never mind what they said, my love," he whispered in his sweetest and fondest tone; oh, that tone of bewitching fondness! "Rally your spirits, my love—come into the fresh air —come—"

Her recollection, however, was already re-

turning, and with it came the remembrance of that speech of Mrs. Gorhambury's, that had by its cruel suddenness, entirely overset her; and with it came that habitual fortitude, so often exercised before, in the course of a life of anxiety and sorrow, and which had been proof against everything, till now.

It was so completely the habit, of her temper, of her character, to rise up and resist suffering, that no sooner was she restored to her self-possession, after the dreadful shock she had received, then she attempted gently to release herself from the encircling arms of her lover; and looking up again into his eyes, with the most confiding expression, she said:

"I can bear to hear it now, for I am certain you will explain everything." Then turning to Mrs. Gorhambury, still supported by Philip's arm round her waist, for she was indeed unable to stand alone, she said, "I think I could not have understood you rightly, Madam, for indeed it seems more like the terrible confusion

of a delirious dream, than anything else. I am sure, if Philip has anything to tell which ought to be told, it is only the suddenness of our meeting, that has prevented it. We, really, have had no time for explanations."

He stooped down as she said this, as if with an invincible impulse to kiss that head which was but a little raised from his shoulder; but his mother, harshly, and with an almost passionate gesture of the hand, prevented him.

"How dare you!" darted from her angry eye.

Then putting her own arm round Miss Lovel's waist, with a determination not to be resisted, she released her from her son's embrace, and placing her upon one of the little garden-chairs, she said:

"I am shocked at the pain I have been obliged to give, and as you do not seem at present very well able to bear what I have further to say, perhaps this young man and I had better leave you, and I will come again in

the evening, when you are a little recovered, and tell you all which it is necessary you should know."

"I would rather hear it now," said Hernana, deadly pale, and endeavouring to keep down the nervous trembling and shivering that was creeping over her. "Don't keep me in suspense, if you please. If there is anything to be told against Philip, let me hear it at once."

"Told against him! Hernana—Miss Lovel, I mean; surely you have not already forgotten the facts with which I have just made you acquainted."

"No, not quite," confusedly; "I cannot understand — another! Some entanglement with another! What was it?"

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Gorhambury, almost touched herself, by this scene, whilst Philip stood there, the picture of despair. "Entanglement, is but a mild word to express the cruel truth; that, in short, Philip has pledged himself to another."

"But pledged or not pledged!" he cried, coming hastily forward, "who never will be that other's, engaged to be married, Thursday, Wednesday, Tuesday, this very hour—would break that engagement! Nay, would fling away the offered hand at the very altar! for one woman alone he loves, and one woman alone shall be his wife!"

And he threw himself upon his knees before Hernana, as he spoke, and endeavoured again to fling his arms round her. But she drew back.

"Did I hear you right, Philip?" she said, in a trembling voice, "or do my ears deceive me. There is such a confusion of ringing voices. I cannot—I cannot compose myself—but did I hear rightly, my Philip?"

"Yes! precious darling of my heart! though I steeped my soul in blackest perjury, I would do it, will do it, and more, if there could be more, would do for you!"

"Perjury! I don't understand!"

"Philip! how can you—how can you keep

her in this cruel state of suspense? Oh! what a fool I was," mentally ejaculated Mrs. Gorhambury, "not to tell her all this alone! Rise, Sir, from your knees, where you know you have no right to be! Miss Lovel, summon your fortitude, for you *shall* know all; indeed, you *must!* This cruel, treacherous young man is engaged to another—has been engaged to her for six months—and he is only trifling with you."

"Trifling, mother!" cried Philip, starting up. "Hernana, hear me! hear me!"

"Hear you, Philip! Yes!" she said, making the most dreadful efforts to appear calm; "only tell me this is a mistake!—not true! Only tell me that! Oh! I will be so glad to hear you!"

"He cannot say it!" said Mrs. Gorhambury; "he knows he cannot!"

"Can you not, Philip? Speak to me, Philip!"

But Philip answered not to the appeal; all he could utter was:

"I am yours!—yours for life and death!—and what matters the rest?"

"Matters!—much!" she said, in a tone as if her heart were broken, it came forth so feeble and so hollow. "Is it so, really so, Mrs. Gorhambury? Is it really so, Philip?"

There was no answer.

She fell back in her chair, covered her eyes with her hands, and remained motionless a few moments. She was endeavouring to quiet her thoughts; and she was casting up one short, fervent prayer for strength, to the true fountain of real strength.

Mrs. Gorhambury and her son, stood in a sort of mute and almost reverential expectation, during this short time, waiting till Hernana should uncover her eyes, and speak again. Presently the hands dropped, and displayed a countenance rendered serene by self-victory, and the noble courage of endurance. There was a sort of glory in it.

Philip wild with love and admiration was rushing forwards to cast himself at her feet

again, and renew his passionate declarations, but she waved him back, with a melancholy fimness, and turning to Mrs. Gorhambury, said:

"I can bear to hear the whole truth now—if you will please to tell it me."

And then Mrs. Gorhambury proceeded, though with some difficulty, to relate what had happened, and the position in which Philip stood—describing the attachment of Maria, the solemn pledges which he had given, and ending by an appeal that was both eloquent and affecting, beseeching Miss Lovel to do that for him, which he was too unprincipled to do for himself, and save his honour and her own.

The narration was only interrupted by a few sighs, that were almost sobs, upon the part of the listener, for Philip stood by perfectly still, as if resolved neither to move nor speak. These sobs kept now and then breaking through the course of Mrs. Gorhambury's narration in a strange pathetic manner; but it was evident

the greatest effort was being made to repress them. When Mrs. Gorhambury had ended, there was again a brief pause.

It seemed as if Hernana was preparing to speak, and endeavouring to do it with calmness and deliberation. Once she glanced at Philip, and a wild pang of love and passion seemed almost to distort her countenance; but it was subdued by a strong effort, and she did not look at him again.

"Mrs. Gorhambury," she said, "I thank you for telling me what you have done, and so speedily; for you know what I ought to do, and the sooner it is all over the better—the less pain—the—you are quite right; there can be but one thing to be done, we must not meet again—Philip and I.—Farewell, Philip!"

He stood there looking wistfully at her, but said nothing, till she rose from her seat to go away: her steps were tottering: he rushed forwards to support her.

"No—no," she said: "it must not be!"

"What must not be? Am I in my senses? Are you in yours? What must not be? One thing I know," he cried, bursting out violently, "must not be, that I and you should be parted—that must not, and shall never—never be!"

"Rash boy!" cried his mother: "what are you saying? Is no obligation sacred in your eyes? Would you really persist in this vain attempt to betray two women who have trusted you?"

"Never mind her—never mind her, Hernana; think only of yourself and me—of the duty we owe to each other. You will—you must!"

"No, Philip," she said, stopping and turning her pale face round to him, the features fixed as if in marble, the eyes only appearing alive, and they were gleaming with resolution. "No, Philip, here we part. Do not persist, it

is in vain: there is no alternative. Do what is right—your duty—and leave me to mine. We must not break Maria Westmore's heart. Let me go, pray, Philip! I don't feel quite—quite well! Mrs. Gorhambury, pray ask him to let me go; for nothing—nothing, Philip, can alter what is the truth, and we are parted for ever."

"Go then," he said, releasing her; "if you can part with me so easily, I am sure I cannot have the slightest wish to detain you."

She glanced up at him—full in the face, with a look that said:

"Is this you?"

Then in her humble, pious heart, she ejaculated her thanks. The task was rendered easier, was rendered possible. He was more angry and less miserable. She could bear his anger, his injustice, his indifference, anything better than his misery. Oh! not his misery.

She did not look again at either mother or

son, but made the best of her way to the house. When there, she sent a message by the only servant, to her father, to say that she was not very well, perhaps over tired and had got up too early, and walked too long before breakfast, that she was gone into her own room to lie down for an hour, and would then come to him. And so she went patiently and quietly with her half-broken heart, into her room, and shut her door, and drew the curtains of her little window, and the curtains of her bed; and shutting out the light of day, laid herself down not to be miserable, but to struggle with her misery, with her own passions, with her own rebellious beating heart, and to submit.

"Where thou leadest, there let me go; let thy choice be my choice; shall I not take up my appointed cross; shall I mourn, because this happiness is denied?"

Such was the course of her thoughts, incoherent and confused, at present, but gradually subsiding into their usual calm endurance, and

habitual self-sacrifice. She had been so long accustomed to suffer, that it seemed but returning to the usual course of life to have to suffer on.

CHAPTER X.

It was the Thursday afterwards, the very next Thursday, that the bells were ringing merrily for Miss Westmore's wedding, which took place upon that day, as appointed. A more glorious morning never shone upon a marriage, if that could have been a good omen, where no omens could give promise of happiness. Still there were all the usual attendants upon, and harbingers of future felicity, a gay group of merry bridemaids, a very pretty bride, whose face beamed with felicity, a very handsome bridegroom, who if he did

look a little pale and nervous, went through the ceremony in a most interesting manner. A very elaborate breakfast; Champagne undeniably of the first class; speeches, congratulations, a beautiful carriage, four horses, man and maid behind; tears whilst in her mother's and father's arms, and a sunshine, which might have made a rainbow behind the little cloud. He puts her into the carriage, steps in after her, and they are off. Mrs. Gorhambury heaves a deep sigh, and turns into the dining-room, satisfied that one of the best days work of her life is concluded; and Mr. Gorhambury looks, perhaps, a thought less gloomy and uncomfortable than usual, as he stands at the window talking with the Dean, whose face yet bears the traces of recent emotion. For the Dean loved his daughter much, and he had given her away. He had bestowed her well, but still she was gone; he had given her away to another. Lady Maria took this as she took all things, very quietly

Hernana sat in the little parlour by the side of

the sofa; *his* gift, upon which her father lay dozing. She had her needle work in her hand, for she knew by long experience the tranquillising effect of that little homely employment. Some one, once said to her, "I know you are suffering, for you are sewing." In happier hours, she had usually something more important to be busy about.

And as she sewed, the merry bells came sounding in through the open casement, and the sweet smell of the flowers, and the bright sunshine, and the noise of birds, whispering and chattering in the creepers with which the house was covered; and the gentle wind, that there was, waving among the branches of the shrubs in the garden!

And she felt *so* alone! Such moments of natural cheerfulness and beauty, are soothing to all griefs but those of love. The heart is softened by them to love, and the one—that one so dear, is more missed, longed for, with more cruel yearnings, at such sweet hours than at any other.

The bells kept pealing, pealing—and the sun shining, and the birds chattering and whispering, till her very heart in its loneliness seemed ready to die. And then she lifted up her dark, sorrowful eyes, and wished, if it pleased God, that she might die. But she glanced at her father sleeping there; his beautiful and delicate face, now aged and furrowed by severe suffering, and she retracted the impatient wish.

She had not seen Philip again after parting from him in the unsatisfactory manner she had done, in the garden. One angry, reproachful note he had written; begun in anger, at least, but ending in lamentations and entreaties —conjuring her to let him see her once more.

To this she had replied calmly and firmly, that for them to meet again was impossible. That the only thing now to be done was to forget each other as they could, and that she believed that if they would honestly give themselves up to their respective duties, they would find peace, if not felicity. At least, that

was all she looked to for herself, but she hoped his lot might be happier.

He made one more effort to see her, coming to the little gate, which he found locked, and begging for admission.

When he found her so resolute, he was mortified and angry, and it became more easy, nay, he took a certain pleasure in revenging himself upon her firmness, by affecting insensibility. Besides, Maria really was so pleasing and so much attached to him; and after all, his pride was so much gratified by the position in which he was placed through this eligible match, and his mother so skilfully insinuated these things in his ear, that when Thursday came, he was able to go through the ceremony with much more ease and cheerfulness, than he could have thought possible. For his feelings were excitable rather than deep—and then it is, alas! so easy to stifle our better feelings.

Maria had been anxious to run down to the old house to visit her friend, so soon as she

knew of her arrival, which was not until three days after it had taken place; for both Philip and Mrs. Gorhambury were anxious to keep it from her as long as possible. Upon the second or third day, however, she had learned it, and though declaring herself so full of business, that she had not a moment to spare, she said she must go and have a chat with Hernana.

She had all a young girl's natural impatience to talk over, and discuss her happiness; tell of her little troubles and anxieties, and of all her joys and sacrifices; even from a sweet walk with him, to the incomparable box of flowers just arrived from Paris, and the beautiful trinkets Philip Gorhambury had given her.

Mrs. Gorhambury had not much sympathy to bestow upon the sorrows of others; yet Hernana's conduct had so delighted her—her firmness had given her such a blessed relief, and she had behaved altogether, as she said to herself, so well—that she should be anxious to spare her every particle of unnecessary suffering.

Besides, she was not without anxiety that if the two girls met, something of the fatal secret might transpire. So she managed to put off, and to delay the intended visit; now upon pretence that Mr. Lovel must not be disturbed; now for one reason or another; so as there were in fact but very few days to get through, and a world of things to be done, the visit was exchanged for a note; and a very affectionate one it was from Maria to Hernana, that drew forth an equally affectionate reply, and so the matter ended.

It was, indeed, the greatest relief to Hernana to be spared this visit; a thing she dreaded beyond measure. Not only for the excessive pain the presence of Maria might give her, but because she feared that something might escape her, under the agitation of her feelings, that would give Maria some slight hint of the truth, and thus poison her happiness; for the least intimation is sufficient to awaken suspicion, and the whole truth is certain, sooner or later, to be found out.

As regarded Philip Gorhambury's gifts, you will, perhaps, think, after the manner in which he had behaved, that she conducted herself with very little delicacy. I dare say that if it had been your case, you would have scorned to accept them after what had passed, and would have returned, as far as it was possible, every one of them. She did no such thing. She would not wound him so.

After all, she could not help pitying, while she blamed him, pitying his weakness, compassionating over his faults; his punishment she feared would be greater than he was himself aware of; she would give him no unnecessary pain; she quietly allowed everything to remain as it was. Nay, she was able to take a melancholy, and not ungenerous pleasure in these proofs of his kindness.

Time rolled on; and quietly with his kind and soothing touches effaced the memory of

the past. She found it more easy to recover her peace of mind, than she had found it to preserve her tranquillity under the alternations of suspense. The marriage with another in such cases has the effect of death. The severance is more terrible, the first wretchedness more cruel; but the alleviating effect of time is certain.

Her days were occupied by objects which interested her heart, and called her abilities into full exercise. In the first place, there was her father. He had been allowed to return to his curacy, without which, indeed, he would have been no longer able to subsist; but under a sort of tacit understanding, that such part of his duties as the state of his health rendered it impossible to fulfil, his daughter should perform for him. He was quite equal to go through his strictly clerical duties. He could reach his church, could preach, read prayers, marry, baptize, and bury; but that assiduous visiting and guardianship of the poor, in which he had been so exemplary, and under which his



of vagrants, half smugglers, half gipsies, infesting the southern parts of Kent and Sussex; and she had determined, before returning home, to visit those districts, and endeavour to gain some intelligence of the habits and customs of these tribes of wanderers, among some one of which she doubted not that her son, if he existed, would be found. She had spent a couple of months in the most toilsome and tedious researches, but the gangs of gipsies that had haunted the neighbourhood the year before, were now gone elsewhere, and had so completely cleared away from that part of the country, that there was not a vestige of them left.

The habits of these people are so little known, and they excite so little attention, that it is not surprising that nothing could be discovered.

The only fresh information that she received was from the gaoler at the prison of Lewes. She had learned, among a few other trifling facts, connected with these wanderers, that a

gipsey lad, named Big Ben, had been committed to Lewes gaol about eighteen months before, and had been tried, and from thence been transported.

Her blood ran cold at the intelligence. Was it possible? Might not this be her lost, unhappy boy. Something seemed to interest her more than she could account to herself for, in this gipsy's fate. She went to Lewes, visited the gaol, and requested to see the gaoler.

She was shewn into the neat parlour occupied by the gaoler's wife, most nicely furnished with brightly burnished grate, pictures upon the walls, and geraniums in the windows, everything bespeaking peace and good order.

The gaoler's wife was naturally kind and sympathizing, and seeing this pale and delicate lady, with her tall, slender figure, and a face so singularly expressive of habitual suffering, she seemed to think nothing she could do, too much, to express her pity. Her manner was so gentle and feeling, that it touched Lady Aylmer's heart, and led her to converse more openly with

this young woman than was her usual custom; for she was in general silent and reserved, and little inclined to anything that might approach to gossiping conversation with her inferiors. But now she began to talk about the prison and its inmates, and so, step by step, was led to the subject nearest her heart; and to ask whether gipsies were often committed to prison; and whether she knew anything of their habits, their places of abode, or the divisions of their tribes?

"Very little," the young woman said, "the downs and deep vallies near the south-coast were a good deal infested by them; but they did not often perpetrate any notorious offences, and in their little deceits and pilferings, were so wary, that they were very seldom detected. It was rarely, indeed, that anything approaching to a felony was committed by them, though there were strange tales of secret and cruel murders, sometimes done in revenge, though she, for her part, did not much believe them. The gipsies were mostly a tricking set,

taking advantage of silly people, and very shrewd and clever themselves.

"Was there not a gipsy youth between seventeen and eighteen years of age, committed to this prison for housebreaking, about eighteen months ago," asked Lady Aylmer with a trembling voice.

"I really don't remember, Ma'am."

"He was called Big Ben, I think they told me."

"Oh, yes! now I recollect; Big Ben! Yes, I remember my husband talking a good deal about that at the time; but I think, if I recollect, it rather justified what I have been saying about these gipsies. It was thought rather a singular circumstance to have one committed for housebreaking; but he had been engaged in smuggling, I believe, and so got acquainted with a regular gang of London thieves, and was by them drawn into a participation in this affair. My husband pitied the poor gipsy lad a good deal, and his sentence was commuted to—Oh, here comes Mr. Arnott to speak for himself."

And Mr. Arnott entered.

He was a strong-built man, with a firm but remarkably mild and benevolent countenance; the habitual exercise of good-will, and the best of charities—care and consideration for those in his power—had impressed themselves upon his countenance.

"This lady," said his wife, with a sort of gesture of introduction of the two to each other, "has called, I believe, to make some inquiries. Was it about Big Ben, in particular, Madam?" turning to Lady Aylmer.

"Yes," said Lady Aylmer in a low voice, "I have reasons for wishing to learn every particular connected with that unfortunate youth."

"He *was* unfortunate," said Mr. Arnott, "and one of those, and they are not a few among our visitors here, intended by nature for better things, one whom unfortunate circumstances and a vicious training, rather than natural depravity, had led astray. Poor fellow! but he was not altogether deserted neither."

Lady Aylmer sighed, then endeavouring to gather courage to make her next question, with a voice almost inarticulate from suppressed emotion, she asked:

"Was the poor youth a gipsy born? Had he the eyes and the hair of the gipsy race? I thought you said they seldom—"

"Yes, he was a genuine gipsy. No doubt of that. His eyes were as black as night, and with the peculiar gipsy expression; his hair coal-black, and his skin as swarthy as any Egyptian among them all. No doubt of his being a genuine gipsy."

She breathed more freely. Yet some way she felt dissatisfied She had almost made up her mind that in this culprit she should find her son —almost reconciled herself to receive him with joy even so—any way so that she found him.

"Perhaps he might have been so tanned by the sun and air as to have taken this dark colour. I have heard that exposure to the air will do it. That many among the gipsies—" and again her voice faltered, "are

not of the race. Children stolen sometimes. One has heard of such things."

"Yes, Madam, such things undoubtedly do occur, though not very often, I believe. But it is my opinion that no experience, no rearing even under the same circumstances, ever makes one assume the peculiar characteristics of another, as I could instance from this very case. There was a youth, a friend of the poor lad's, who was most assiduous in coming to visit him, and who belonged, as I ascertained to the same tribe; and yet there was not the slightest resemblance between them. For the other youth had large blue eyes, open countenance, frank and free, and with not the slightest touch of gipsy deceit about him; a fair white skin, which it seemed as if no sun could tan, and fine abundance of golden hair."

Lady Aylmer started up, her hands clasped before her, struggling as if in agony for speech, but speech was denied. All she could utter was a faint ejaculation of "My God!" and she fell back again senseless in her chair.

The good gaoler and his wife, with the most anxious solicitude, applied every means for her recovery, exchanging significant and sympathizing looks with each other the while.

"I shouldn't wonder—I do believe, that this lady must some how have lost a child stolen away by the gipsies," whispered the wife.

"Hush! hush! don't prattle, dear. See she is coming to herself."

She gasped, opened her eyes, clasped the gaoler's hand in both hers, and looked up in his face with the most beseeching and eager expression. He understood her speechless agony, and went on.

"He was a beautiful creature as ever my eyes looked upon; and if ever I saw mortal being upon whom the Almighty had stamped the likeness of an angel—that youth was he."

She uttered a shrill cry of ecstasy, and clasped her hands again wildly together.

"He was the gentlest, bravest, and best of creatures, gipsy bred as he was—such a sense of right and justice, and truth and love—

how he came by it all, He, who created him alone knows. Rarely have I found the like in mortal man. His goodness to that poor foolish, misled Big Ben—passes words. Oh, Madam! but you are too much affected. What—?"

For she had sank on her knees, and was casting up her arms in a passion of gratitude to heaven. They would have raised her; but she found words at last.

"Let me be! let me be! Shall I not thank God? Oh, after all I have suffered! all I have so dreaded! to find him thus—thus! My baby! my child! my sweet, innocent little boy! Oh, blessed and praised be His mercies for ever and ever!"

This paroxysm being over, she rose from her knees, and wiping her eyes, which were streaming with tears of gratitude, begged Mr. Arnott to tell her all he knew about this youth.

"But first—first of all," every limb trembling with impatience; "tell me; do you know where he is?"

"No, Madam, I have not the slightest notion where the tribe have journeyed to, and it is long since they left this part of the country. But take comfort, lady," said he, affected by her look of blank disappointment; "there can be no difficulty in tracing them. Our police will ferret them out easily, once put upon the scent, and the very circumstance of this remarkable youth being one of them, is sufficient to point them out, and render the following their beat easy."

"So be of good comfort—be of good comfort, lady," said the young woman, "if you have lost a child, stolen by them wretched gipsies, and this youth be he, sure, sure now, it'll not be long before you will find him again."

"My child had large blue eyes, and hair like silk, of a golden colour; and oh! young as he was, he had that bold free eye of which you spoke—his father, Lord Aylmer had it before him."

"Lord Aylmer!" said the gaoler. "Are you

the unfortunate Lady Aylmer whose misfortunes were so much the talk of the newspapers, some fourteen years ago, when I was quite a youngster? I remember the story though. I have seen Lord Aylmer once or twice, for I came from that part of the country. Let me recollect! Yes, my lady, I *do* think it is most probable—I hope, I may say, almost certain this youth is your son. Now I think of it, he certainly had a strong likeness to the Aylmer family. My mother was born on the estate, and I remember the last two lords, father and son, well."

She sat down; she tried to stop the hurried pantings of her heart, to steady her fluttering nerves — to silence the rushing confusion of sounds, like that of many waters, that was in her ears—to be able to think, question and listen.

"Tell me more—tell me all you can recollect."

"Why, it is not much more that I have to tell, for it being near the assizes and the prison very full, I could not give much at-

tention to this particular case. All I know is, that this extraordinary boy was very kind in coming to assist poor Big Ben, who, though he was a great, full-grown youth, was almost as ignorant and, one might say, innocent as a child; and would sit and blubber and cry for hours. This young friend of his, would come and talk with him, and exhort him to courage, and patience, and submission to the law; and most of all, to avoid the bad company of the prison, and keep himself to himself. And he had such a way with him, that he imposed, as it were, upon all those misguided wretches, and there was less drinking and swearing than usual, even in the common wards, whilst he was in the habit of visiting them. Latterly, he brought another man with him, a rather singular-looking being, with hair and beard untrimmed, and his dress shabby and somewhat out of the way; he had a pale, sickly face, but large black eyes, that looked almost inspired, if one may say so, they were so passionate and earnest. I

could have fancied the prophets of old might have looked thus. This man used to bring his Bible, and read aloud to the prisoners; for the young man, gentleman I may call him, had asked me to give him leave to do this, saying: 'There is nothing like the Bible, Mr. Arnott; believe me, I have seen a good deal of these sort of poor misled creatures, short as my life has been, and there is nothing for them like the Bible. Let them hear the Word of God; that may have power over their hearts; for the word of man will do little or nothing.'

"I was of his opinion; but was surprised at the way he spoke and thought. And so I gave permission; and he and that other, went in and out of the prison as much as they would. And the Word of God was read to these wretched criminals and outcasts almost daily. Many scoffed, and made game, and turned a deaf ear, at first. Others, like those of Athens to St. Paul, said, 'We will hear thee again of this matter;' and sure enough they did; and

others followed their example. In short, the common room became at last an altered place. But after the assizes, when Big Ben was sentenced to transportation, and taken away, I saw no more of them. And really, one thing follows upon another so, that till you came this day, my lady, I had not thought much about it"

Lady Aylmer wrote to Hernana, apparently in great hurry and agitation of mind. She did not enter into particulars, but merely said she thought she had discovered a clue which would lead to the discovery of her long-lost son; that she might have to visit Scotland and Ireland; and should in all probability be absent some time; for she had resolved not to return till her efforts had been crowned with success.

CHAPTER XI.

And thus was Hernana left to the solitude of her crushed and disappointed heart—to the performance of her round of monotonous duties, uncheered by happiness in the present, or hope of happiness for the future: as far, at least, as regards what is commonly esteemed happiness in this world.

Many a girl, would have been utterly spirit-broken and miserable under the gloom of such a prospect, even if her health had not altogether given way. Not so Hernana.

I sometimes fear to weary my readers, and to

diminish the effect I wish so earnestly to produce, by for ever and ever, returning to and harping. upon the same intimate persuasion; but I cannot avoid it. The more I consider human nature and human life, under all its various circumstances and relations, its sorrows and its joys, its evils and its temptations, its duties and its claims, the more intimately one conviction presses upon my mind.

The conviction at which Claribert had arrived —whose only education had been that of the experience of naked facts—of life in its most crude and unsophisticated form, the same conviction has been forced upon me, by reflection, books, and the analysis of my own heart.

Hermana sought for and found that strength which is, in my opinion, the only effectual strength.

She was not alone.

Desolate, and deserted, and forlorn, as her lot might appear to others, she was not any one of these things.

Who can be desolate who believes in the ever-living presence of the Higher power; who deserted—who credits and realises the present existence of a sympathizing Saviour—a friend, an actual friend of poor fallible, faltering, suffering man; who forlorn—who regards life but as the first busy and important act of an interminable chain, and feels that he must be up and doing.

She strove hard to bring her wandering affections under her own power again; to look steadily at what she had lost—not under the delusive colouring of partial affection—but to regard at the past as it really was, and painful as was the confession, she had the courage to own to herself, that Philip deserved to lose her esteem.

She could not look back upon his whole conduct both as regarded Maria and herself, without arriving at the conviction that she had been mistaken in him—in his character was wanting manliness, constancy, and true courage—that he was but a trifler, after all, in spite

of his apparent spirit and energy—a trifler in feelings and in morals.

Gradually, her esteem and value for him declined, and with them her affection—all of it, at least, that was too imaginative and passionate—died away; a tender anxiety for his real welfare, and for the happiness of the pretty Maria, was all that remained.

Caritas—that expressive word, of which no translation into our language can give the full force—which cannot be rendered by charity, nor even by love—that large, expansive, glowing, generous feeling, took possession of her heart, and devoted her to love and seek their happiness, and the happiness of all mankind.

It had become necessary, as I have explained, that she should undertake, in the present state of her father's health, a large share of that part of his duty which consisted in visiting and looking after the poor. This, in her present situation, was peculiarly fortunate. It forced upon her a vast deal of wholesome employ-

ment, and so much active business, that she had not much leisure left for melancholy thoughts, even had she not resolutely forbade herself the indulgence.

There was abundant scope for her goodness and activity. The town of G——, and more especially that portion of it, which lay in the parish with which she had to do, was in a dreadfully neglected state. The town was a very ancient one, and a large portion of its streets, alleys, and courts were still much as they had been centuries ago. Houses crowded upon each other; the apartments, low, dark, and close; the streets and alleys narrow and filthy; the courts, if possible, more gloomy and unwholesome still. A wretched and neglected population inhabited these places, who had been left almost entirely to themselves until Mr. Lovel took the curacy; and during his absence were rapidly relapsing into their former state of vice and misery.

Much of Hernana's time was spent among these wretched dwellings; but the mass of

disorder and corruption was enormous—more than the strength of one man had been able to cope with—and certainly not to be overcome by one woman, be her energies ever so great. It was a veritable Augean stable!

Often, after having exhausted herself with fruitless endeavours to amend what was wrong, she would return home disheartened and almost utterly dispirited. But still she persevered. She considered that every little done, however little it might be, was something; and that it was hers to labour in the vocation to which she was called, and for One Higher to bless the work.

So she toiled on.

Her only change of thought was from the letters she now and then received from Lady Aylmer, who did not write often, and her letters when they came, were full of disappointment and despondency.

Sometimes it happens so in life. Everything in which we take interest or concern, seems to be going wrong together.

Lady Aylmer was sometimes in London, sometimes travelling from place to place; but she could obtain no tidings of the singular person whom she was persuaded, would prove to be her son.

The clue seemed to be lost. No such person was to be heard of, among any of the principal gangs of gipsies that could be traced out. Sometimes these people migrated abroad, she was told. She began to fear that the tribe with which her son travelled must have left the country; for no person answering to that description was to be found in the gangs generally known to the police.

So months rolled away, and at last, time in its course brought Philip Gorhambury, and his young and pretty wife home from their continental tour.

They were to occupy a charming place, about three miles from G——, situated in a most lovely part of the romantic country which surrounds the city. Their house was furnished with everything that luxury or

elegance could devise, to render an abode delightful; fine, beautiful flower gardens and pleasure grounds surrounded it—falling waters, pleasant shady groves, gay parterres, enchanting prospects—for they were surrounded with splendid scenery.

There was a piano-forte chosen by Mrs. Gorhambury herself, of the finest tone imaginable, and Philip's violoncello ready in its case.

Why do I weary myself with enumerating the means of enjoyment which surrounded those, who had no appetite to enjoy. It is, I believe, impossible for life to present a more tasteless aspect than that in which there is nothing left to be wished for—or rather, perhaps it would be a more faithful expression to say—everything left to be wished for. All the outer gifts of existence lavished around with the utmost profusion, and the man, the soul of man himself, bare and unfruitful as the sand of the desert.

He had travelled before, so that means of excitement had considerably lost its power.

With an interesting companion indeed, all the first, fresh pleasure which scenes of beauty and historic interest present, would have been enhanced to the highest degree; but as it was, he felt that to be two, was only to have a weight attached to him, which infringed upon his liberty of action, without adding to his enjoyment.

He set out resolved not to be pleased, and inclined to regard everything the poor young girl said or did, with an evil, jaundiced eye.

She was a mere school-girl—scarcely, one may say, educated at all—loaded with superficial accomplishments, but almost entirely without ideas. Ignorant to a degree, and wholly to seek upon every topic that adorns or enlarges the mind, she could not be a companion for a clever man in the usual sense of the word; but she might have become an object of tender interest to a loving and benevolent one.

She had a most amiable disposition, a lively fancy, and a very loving, affectionate heart, with great simplicity of character in spite of

her artificial education. She had considerable natural taste, and could have taken the most lively pleasure in the various objects which their travels presented, had not her enjoyments been damped by all his coldness and unkindness.

Her abilities, such as they were, and they were far from despicable, were utterly depressed by the mortifying contempt with which he got into the way of treating her.

She was not, unfortunately, one precisely calculated to interest and please a man of his taste and character; but many men, far superior to Philip Gorhambury, indulgent and candid, have managed to find a vast deal of happiness in the devoted affection of women far inferior to what Maria Westmore might have been. But he would not even try to love her or to understand her, to spare her or to consider her. Philip Gorhambury thought only of himself, that he was a victim, thrown away in a most unsuitable lot, and disappointed and wretched; he pitied himself extremely, and he deserved pity—so far, at least, as it

is due to those who have brought their unhappiness upon themselves by their own conduct; and in this egotistical self-compassion, he suffered himself to be so absorbed, that he was totally insensible to the claims and sufferings of others. Insensible, rather that he never thought of them, than that he was incapable of feeling for them if he had.

He indulged himself in positive dislike of his hapless young wife; blaming her as the cause of his misery, because she had loved, and could not please him. He did not even thank her for her love; he hated every proof she ventured to give of it. It was this fond and foolish partiality of hers, he said to himself, that had beguiled him to his ruin.

And so poor, unhappy, disappointed girl, she thus painfully travelled through France and Italy and Germany, with the man of her heart, the man her poor childish, inexperienced heart had fixed its school-girl fancy upon, and whom she had fallen in love with, deeply in love, as silly girls do. Yet, silly girl or not, ther

was a real love mixed up with much romance and foolishness. The poor little thing had a heart, and a worthy and kind husband might have made what he would of it.

She had so longed to travel, and had thought with such rapturous pleasure of doing so with Philip. To travel by the side of him she loves is perhaps the highest earthly felicity which a woman can picture to herself. And this was the reality!

How stale, flat, and uninteresting everything appeared, as she sat in the carriage, gazing upon the beautiful scenes they passed through, whilst her companion muffled up in his travelling cloak, and sunk back in the opposite corner, engaged with his own bitter regrets, pretended to be asleep. If she ventured to make an observation, he would start up as if disagreeably disturbed, open his eyes, look out, and with some sarcastic remark upon her want of taste or her childish facility in being pleased, sink back and resume his dose again. Did they visit galleries of pictures,

palaces or churches, he left her to the guide, to seek her own explanations, strolling on by her side, or usually a little in advance of her, lost, as it appeared, in his own sublime contemplations, in which she was not privileged to share.

Oh! what a world of miseries, small in detail, infinite in amount, may be compressed into the circle of one little wedding-ring.

In the solitude of the heart to which she had been condemned, poor Maria had looked round upon every side for consolation, but knew not in what quarter to find it. Her mother, she knew, was quite incapable of entering into any distresses of this nature. So long as her husband did not beat her, and that she had plenty of money to spend, Lady Maria would never believe that there was any reason for complaint. With her father she had always

lived upon those terms of reserve and distance, which renders confidence of the heart impossible. Mrs. Gorhambury was too formidable a person to be complained to, and Mr. Gorhambury would have been a mere cypher in everybody's eyes, only that he was more disliked than cyphers usually are, or can be. There was one, whom she used to like very much, quite to love in former days, but they had seen so little of each other lately. Yet something drew the heart of the poor young wife to her former friend, and the second day after their return to England, and the establishment of our young couple at Durham Lodge, Maria ordered her carriage, and the coachman was directed to drive to the old Parsonage.

The pretty elegantly dressed creature, stepped out when the carriage stopped at the little iron gate, and telling the footman to let the coachman drive up and down a little, whilst he waited for her outside, lifted the latch herself, and entered the garden—the garden, which by the care of Philip, had been some few months

ago so well arranged; but which now, through want of time, and want of means, on the part of its present possessor, had pretty much resumed its air of uncomfortable disorder.

Maria looked round, and felt her spirits only sinking the faster for the desolation of the scene. There are times when small things of this kind have a most infectious power. There was an air of unhappiness, a want of cheerfulness about the old place, which she had never observed before; for, in truth, everything had been sadly neglected of late. Not, however, because Hernana was unhappy—though we cannot say that she was very *happy*—so much, as that she was too much wearied and worn out with exertions in the cause of others, to have any strength to bestow upon matters of mere self-gratification. And she had less money to spare than ever, as the claims for assistance from the poor around her became more pressing, as her personal acquaintance with misery was more extended. She was sitting in the

parlour alone, engaged in needle-work, when the door opened and Maria, who had let herself in, appeared. Hernana started up, and could scarcely contain her surprise.

"Returned," she cried, "and here so soon. But what is the matter, my dear Mrs. Gorhambury? Have you been ill? I am sorry to see you look so thin and changed."

"Do I look thin and changed?" was the answer. "But why do you call me Mrs. Gorhambury? Don't do that. Don't be formal with me, Hernana, for I am come to you to seek a friend," and her lips began to quiver a little, "not a mere acquaintance. We used to be friends, and I hope you will be my friend still: I want a friend very much."

"Dear Maria! what pleasure it gives me to hear you speak in that affectionate manner. You have not forgotten our old friendship? This is a great pleasure to me. But sit down, will you not? How beautiful you look, Maria," she added, as she placed her upon the comfortable sofa—Philip's gift. "Travelling has

improved your beauty more than your health; for you are very thin and very pale."

"Thank you, for saying that, Hernana. Everybody says I am so changed, that I was afraid I was grown ugly. You know that is what people usually mean when they say one is changed; and do you know? I care a vast deal more for my good looks than ever I did before I was married. Not that it much signifies either." And she sighed.

Hernana was not so indiscreet a friend as to desire the confidence of a married life. She knew such troubles were usually best kept within the narrow boundary of the two most intimately concerned; and "qu'entre l'écorce et le bois, l'on ne met pas le doigt;" but Maria, who had not much discretion, and less reserve, was not inclined to have it so at all. She was come to seek a confidant, and she went on.

"I look thin and pale, you say. Ah, Hernana! how little did I think when just six months ago I started from this place with Philip Gorhambury, esteeming myself the very happiest

creature upon the face of the earth, that I should in that little, little time, come back the most miserable."

"My dear Maria!"

"Yes," and the tears began to gather into her eyes, "the most miserable, for I am married to a man it is utterly impossible to please. I could almost think he hates me, Hernana."

"My dear girl! don't talk in this way—pray don't speak in this manner—it cannot be right."

"He once was great friends with you. He seemed to like you. Tell me, dear Hernana, how you managed to please him; teach me how to please him. He is excessively unkind—oh! you cannot imagine how unkind! and yet I cannot help loving him. I try all I can to dislike him, as I am sure he dislikes me; to hate him for the contempt and almost aversion he shows for me; but I cannot do it—I cannot do it."

"And never, never try to do it, dear girl,"

said Hernana, now coming and sitting down by her upon the sofa; her interest greatly awakened by this short and artless speech. "Never try to learn not to love him. That will never be the way to make him love you."

"I don't know. He seems so to dislike me—absolutely to dislike me for loving him—so that I sometimes think if I could bring myself to hate him, he might care for me more."

"No, my dear, that would not do; love him, love him faithfully, or, dear Maria—but let us see whether we cannot hit upon some better method of showing your affection, than, perhaps, you have been practising."

She reflected a little, then, she said:

"Maria, you must not let Philip Gorhambury be a castaway, and if you were to teach yourself not to care for him, *that* he would infallibly become. No, no," she repeated half to herself, "that must not be—that must not be."

"I have no power to prevent him casting

himself away," said the poor little wife, sorrowfully; "for he has no value for my affection, and he seems quite sick of my society. He used to like my playing rather, and to accompany me upon his violoncello, you know; but that is all over now. One gets so tired of fiddling all day long—and what else is there to do? He used to be dreadfully *ennuyé* at Rome and at Florence. You can't think how dull and good-for-nothing he would look; and then he would stalk out to the Casinos, or some such places, where, I suppose he played, for there was a great deal of gambling going on, I believe; and I have heard him say once or twice that he was sick of everything upon earth, and the only thing that stirred his blood was the rattle of the dice."

"Is it come to this already?" mentally ejaculated Hernana. "Oh, Philip!"

And then she sighed as she remembered how she had heard a very clever man say, that the finer the faculties the more fatal was it not to exercise them; that it was only those who had

dormant powers unapplied, that knew to the full extent what was really meant by the word *ennui*. And she groaned in spirit at the thought of the sacrifice that had been offered at the shrine of worldly pride and prudence.

But, now, what is to be done?

My tale draws to a close, and I have not half done with it. I intended to have described to you more in detail what took place, from the date of this opening confidence, between these two young women: the generous efforts of Hernana to ensure her rival's happiness, and her lover's happiness with her rival; the wisdom and tenderness of her counsels; and the docility with which the poor disappointed young creature endeavoured to follow them; but all in vain.

There was that fatal element surrounding them which rendered all attempts to recal Philip to a better state of feeling impossible, and this element was unbounded prosperity—health and wealth, funds and consideration, the power to gratify every wish as soon as it

arose; and not one single care, not one single indispensable duty to perform, every day was a day of as unmixed felicity as the days of Seged the Happy, and was, as were those of Seged, utterly and hopelessly miserable.

Vicious, Philip had not as yet become; but Hernana trembled lest vice should not be long in coming. Vice, in the majority, is most often the refuge from that dreaded, that terrible *ennui*, which appears to be the only form of human suffering which it is impossible for human nature to endure: a refuge from that *must* be found, at any cost it would seem.

CHAPTER XII.

We leave the wretched victim, partly of his own faults, partly of circumstances, partly of the faults of others; and his poor little wife, who is vainly trying, under Hernana's guidance, to make an interest for herself in his heart. It was vain, indeed!

The heart could not be awakened. It was fallen into the dead sleep of unchecked self-indulgence.

Hernana did what she could, but all her efforts seemed fruitless to stem this tide of evil. She was forced in mere self-defence to turn

away her eyes, and *refresh* herself with the aspect of real want, of actual privation—sickness, poverty, and sorrow.

These things were wholesome. These were spirit-stirring. They roused, and melted, and mended the heart, and there was comfort to be given, and comfort to be found in giving it. You could help and solace *these* sufferers. They could receive solace amid their real natural wants and privations. You could do much for them.

So to them she turned again, and with a heavy heart—a heart rendered heavy by the prospect of increasing evil, neither to be arrested nor mitigated, in the home of luxury and idleness—she went where there was grief and want, and heavy labour to be endured.

Sorrow and anxiety enough, however, there was to meet her there. For was there not sin and vice, and selfishness and violence, and wrong, and ill-temper and unkindness there too?

But it is more easy to preach the Gospel to

the poor than to the rich; but then, alas! do what she would, how little could she perform; her time, her strength, her powers, how unequal to contend with the mass of ignorance and evil which surrounded her! She was thinking mournfully enough of these things one day; as she had set out to make a longer walk than usual. It was to a distant suburb, which lay at the very further end of this large parish, and which she had not the means of conveyance requisite to enable her to visit often; for the walk to it was very long, and took up more time and strength than she had to spare, from still more urgent duties.

She had, however, been blaming herself for this species of involuntary neglect; and as she walked on, was reflecting sorrowfully upon the impossibility, with her limited means, to suffice to the grievous wants around her—wants occasioned, if not increased, by the negligent indifference of those who ought to have taken the

charge upon themselves. But those were the days of pluralities and non-residences; and the gentleman to whom Mr. Gorhambury had resigned his living, was either, through the pretence, or real necessity, I care not which, of attention to his health, at present abroad.

I have called the place to which she was bound, a suburb. It was rather an outlying village, inhabited by a community chiefly employed in rope-making; their rope-walks lying between them and the city. The place stood upon a bare piece of common land, almost quite uncultivated, and covered with heath furze, and stunted bushes of holly and whitethorn. This piece of unoccupied land was, in all probability, what had tempted these rope-makers to settle in the place. They were a community living to themselves, as is sometimes found in trades of this description, earning but scanty wages, which their wives and daughter attempted to eke out by the then miserable trade of button-making.

They were a poor, and they were an immoral and lawless community, for they lived at least three miles from their parish church, to which they rarely, if ever went; and the little modest meeting-house, which, in some degree repairs the want of spiritual teaching to these sort of communities, was not there to be seen; even the Methodists appeared by some accident or other to have overlooked them.

Hernana visited several cottages, all nearly equally squalid, filthy, and miserable; at last, she came to one, that stood a little apart, and was of a somewhat more decent appearance than the rest. Its aspect was picturesque; for its low, deep roof of heavy thatch, on which stonecrop, and tufts of heathery grass, and even wild flowers were growing, was gilded by the rays of the setting sun, which glittered upon the small, deep-set windows, and shed its long beams over an expanse of the sandy heath land; now purpling with the ling, and adorned with the golden blossoms of the furze.

Mountains, ridge behind ridge, rose in the distance, forming a wild and beautiful scene, which the front of the cottage looked full upon. The door of the house was standing open; and upon one side of it, upon a sort of rude bench, there sat a person, who seemed to be a wayfaring man, something above the lower degree; his face somewhat raised, looking, as it were with a sort of rapt ecstacy over the beautiful scene, and towards the rich crimson, gold and purple clouds that surrounded the setting sun. From the cottage, the low sounds of one reading might be heard.

Hernana paused a moment, unwilling to disturb the man seated upon the bench; and as she stood still in the unbroken silence around, the voice of the reader came up clear, distinct, most tender and most musical; but it was a young man's voice—say rather the voice of an angel.

At last the reading ceased, and then Hernana advanced towards the cottage door.

As she did so, the man seated upon the bench stood up, and saluted her respectfully.

He was a strange, singular-looking man, though his dress was that of an ordinary person. He had on a coat of plain black, rather rusty, and the worse for wear; but his face was so thin and haggard, his eyes so excited, his hair and beard so untrimmed and shaggy, that he appeared very unlike other people. There was in his singularity, however, something rather interesting than alarming, wild as his appearance was.

She returned his salute, but hesitated before entering the cottage.

"Go in without fear," he said. "It is the Lord's work which is going on in that place."

Thus encouraged, she stepped to the door and crossed the threshold silently, unwilling to disturb what was going on, for the reading had been resumed again. The room into which she entered was large, but low; one of those

projecting screens, common in old houses, protected the fireplace from the draught of the door. It was dimly lighted by two small casement windows opposite to each other, but almost buried in the overhanging roofs. A large sort of wooden couch, made of dark oak, was upon one side of the recess by the fireplace, in which an excellent fire was blazing. A handsome dresser and shelves, likewise of oak, and adorned with a goodly row of blue and white china plates and dishes, stood against the wall, and the room was well filled with chairs and tables of various descriptions, every one of which was at present occupied.

The occupants were working men, in their ordinary dresses, and intermingled with women, who seemed just to have put on clean caps to render their appearance a little decent. This audience was seated not only upon chairs, but upon the tables, dresser, some even upon the floor, where a few children were scrambling about, though without making any noise, for the least disturbance was immediately reproved

by a long, low hush-sh-sh ! which ran through the apartment.

The men were of rude appearance, their countenances were almost approaching to the brutal, but this character at present redeemed by the air of serious, fixed attention with which all eyes were rivetted upon the reader, seeming to devour his every word. The women looked demurely heedful; and altogether, the assembly, in spite of the sordidness of their appearance was rendered interesting by the air of rapt attention which pervaded it.

A decent woman of advanced age, dressed in a blue bedgown and black petticoat, with her grey hair drawn up under a mob-cap, white as snow, sat upon a chair by the fire; her spinning-wheel beside her; the wheel of which, however, was still, for she, like the rest, was listening intently.

Upon the oaken couch, the pale, wasted figure of a young woman whom Hernana had come to visit, now evidently in the last stage of a decline, lay extended. Her dress was scrupulously clean and neat; and the pillow under

her head and the quilted coverlid laid over, white as the snow. Her face, which had once been remarkably handsome, was now lean and wasted, and coloured by a hectic flush. She lay there, her bright glittering eyes bent upon the reader, and her thin hands clasped fervently together.

In the centre of this group, which formed a sort of irregular semi-circle, a little advanced before the rest, seated upon a chair a thought more considerable than the others in size and appearance, was the reader, his clear and most harmonious voice sounding through the apartment.

He was a very young man, apparently not more than eighteen or nineteen years of age, above the middle height, and a form and face of the most extraordinary beauty — that beauty possessing a charm indescribable by words; a loveliness, the result of the perfection of external feature, glorified by an air of purity, simplicity, gentleness, and noble strength united.

Profoundly serious, nay, melancholy in its

gravity, was that most lovely countenance—bearing an aspect of almost divine pity and sorrow; yet was the brow so open, so calm, so serene, that the pity, and the sorrow, and the melancholy seemed that of a being belonging not to this vain and troubled world.

His complexion was fair, his cheek slightly tinted with colour, which rose and heightened as he read, his eyes blue, his abundant hair light and golden.

His eyes were fixed upon his book, from which he lifted them at times to impress the meaning of what he read upon his hearers; but he was not aware of the entrance of Hernana, he seemed too intent upon his object to be alive to other things.

He was reading the ninth chapter of St. John, the recovery of sight to the man who was born blind.

The reader stopped. The affecting history had ended; but the silence of attention still continued. Nobody moved or uttered a syllable: their very breath seemed hushed. Presently—

"And now shall we not sing a hymn to the Lord who hath done these great things for us."

Upon which the man who had been sitting upon the bench outside, entered the cottage, and making a respectful salute to Hernana as he passed her, came forward and lifted up that deep sonorous voice of his, which we first heard among the Sussex vallies, with: "The Lord my Shepherd is."

And the most part of those present joined him. A concert of rude voices; but it was the expression of the heart.

The poor young creature upon the wooden couch, who was, indeed, dying of a decline, joined not, but her eyes were lifted up towards heaven, filled with that ecstacy which seems only given to those nearly approaching the solemn confines of meeting worlds, when the veil of the flesh will be withdrawn. The aged mother sat by her with hands clasped and a few tears—tears, they were, of hope and comfort—stealing down her cheeks. The men

opened wide their mouths, pouring forth their deep voices, with which the shrill notes of the women not unpleasingly mingled.

The young man did not sing, but he stood up and looked around him with an expression of love and joy, saddened, yet heavenly.

When the psalm was finished, they all sat down again; and then the young reader, taking up another book which lay upon the dresser behind him, said:

"After we had read the Word of God, and done our poor duty to Him as best we might, by singing forth His holy praise, I thought, my friends, you would, perhaps, like that I should go on with the reading we began a little while ago, but I am afraid it is getting too late."

"Oh no, Master! no, Master!" echoed the voices round; "one stave, be it ever so short a one, before you go away. I couldn't get asleep, I'm sure, the last time for a thinking what that poor fellow would do, cast upon such a wild coast like; and his poor wife and young ones!

Pray, Master, let us have a little more of it."

Such entreaties sounded round the room; the women and men both equally in earnest.

"Well then, here goes," said the young man, evidently much pleased, and cheerfully resuming his place again; "but the sun is setting fast, and, mind, we part at sunset. To-morrow is Sabbath Day. We must have plenty of time to clean and rub up ourselves and our homes to honour the Lord's Day—the great and good Saviour's resurrection day."

"Ay, ay; all right, all right; but please lose no time."

Upon which, in a cheerful, easy tone, he began to read the "Swiss Family Robinson," taking it up at the place where he had left off the Saturday night before.

The pleasure, the interest, the gleaming of intelligence and benevolence visible in the countenances of the delighted listeners, it was, indeed, satisfaction to look upon.

What pleasure greater than to watch those

germs of moral and spiritual beauty, which lie dormant in every man, swelling like the buds at the breath of spring, and bursting up into life.

These poor, low, degenerated, brutalized natures awakened to enjoyments so purifying, so elevating! Probably they knew not why or wherefore; but was it not a blessed sight? Are not these blessed, blessed things?

He read charmingly, varying his tones with true dramatic talent; content to exercise that talent, which might have brought down thunders of applause from an admiring theatre, before this humble audience; recompensed, thrice recompensed, so they were the happier and the better for it.

At last the sun dropped below the horizon, and the reader closed the book. But the audience sat still, as if fascinated with what they had heard, hanging upon his words, reluctant to finish. But he turned to them, and with a face now beaming with satisfaction said:

"All pleasures must come to an end; and we must leave these good folk to sup upon their cray-fish without our company. I am afraid they will find the beast rather tough; and I wish you all may have a better supper, and so good-night. If good Mrs. Beecher will give us leave, and if Mary there does not find it too much for her, we will meet here again on Thursday night. And now, good friends—dear friends—hear me, though I am but a child; and what am I to exhort grown men? You'll go to church or chapel, all of you, won't you, to-morrow? You'll will not, like the brutes that perish, pass the day dedicated to the Lord who made you, and by His express command to be kept holy? You will not, like poor dumb beasts, pass it without honouring Him?"

"No, no, Master;" responded one man, with a grim smile, seeming to take upon himself the office of spokesman for the whole group: "such of us as has clothes fit enough will go there, be sure; and pray for those who haven't."

"You would all of you have clothes good enough, if it were not for the gin-shop, Will Sparkes," put in the leader of the psalmody. "Well, let those go who have, and those who haven't, save their money till they have."

And now the men took their tattered hats and caps, and the women curtseying to Hernana as they passed, the little assembly dispersed. The elder man resumed his place outside the door, the younger one approached the couch, and said, in the kindest tones:

"I am afraid you are very bad to-night—in great pain. This has been too much for you."

"I am in much pain," said Mary, endeavouring vainly to suppress a groan; "but the reading does me good. Now I have been taught all these blessed things, the more I hear of them the happier and stronger I am; and then, that other book is so pretty, when I lay awake at night it is so nice to think of all those wonderful beautiful things. But, oh,

this pain!—this pain!" she almost cried out, writhing under a new spasm.

"Oh, that I could do something for that, too! But what can I do? You want help that I cannot give you."

"The young lady, Miss Lovel, promised to come some day or other to see us," the elder woman said. "She knows a good deal, but—"

"And here she is," said Hernana, coming forward.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE evening was closing fast, as the two left the cottage.

In her anxiety to relieve the poor suffering girl, and the interest she had taken in the scene which just preceded, the time had slipped away. Hernana was used to go about alone, and almost at any hour; but there was a considerable walk, and a very lonely one, lying between her and home.

The sun had long sunk; and the western horizon which presented itself as the two came out, was faintly ruddy with the departing

light. Star after star was coming forth, spangling the clear, unclouded heavens; planets and suns, in their glorious splendour, beaming upon that wide-spreading heath! The distant mountains, dimly visible, were sleeping in the soft, mysterious light. All was still, except a murmur of indistinct voices, heard from the cottages at a little distance; where, from time to time, a door might be heard shutting to, and a light be seen gleaming from a casement window.

She paused, as she crossed the threshold of the cottage, and lifted up her eyes in admiration of the wondrous beauty of the scene before her. The next feeling, as she observed how she had let the time slip by, and how late it was, became one of disagreeable perplexity.

She stood hesitating what to do. The elder man had joined them, as she and the youth left the cottage together; and now, with much respect in his voice, said:

"The evening is closing fast. Has this young lady far to go? This is a lonely and a rude place. Perhaps the young lady would

give us leave to walk behind her, on her way, till we see her safe at home."

To this (for there really was no other alternative) she consented, and the three proceeded together; the young man lingering by her side, whilst the elder one, musing in silence, as was his usual custom, followed them.

She had been much struck with everything she had seen about the young stranger, and was not sorry to have an opportunity of conversing with him; for his manners were so gentle, and there was such an air of natural refinement about him—differing in this respect so widely from his companion—that her curiosity was greatly excited.

And so they talked; for he, on his side, appeared entirely free from anything approaching to conventional reserve, though there was not the least that was obtrusive about him.

"That it is; I have seen so much of them"

—this is the way they were talking—"I have lived with them—loved them, and felt for them. For their sakes, what would I not do? I know how rude, and brutal, and unintelligible, they must appear to people placed at a distance from them. So barbarous! so rough! so disgusting! so almost savage! I do not wonder *they* find it difficult to sympathise with *us*; but *I* know them, and I know there is the heart of flesh beating beneath the dirty, tattered garment, and concealed by ungainly aspect and coarse, hard voice; and more, that there is intellect and wit, and mental power, undeveloped, behind those wild, barbarian features. That is what has made me pity them so intensely—those poor children of one common Father! And yet, perhaps, I am mistaken. If there were more refinement, would they be happier?—But, at least, if they could be made less vicious, they would be happier."

"And is it long that you have pursued this plan of visiting and reading to them?"

"Not more than about eighteen months.

It was a little before that time the dayspring came to me; I became a new creature; I felt that it was what I wanted, all that I had been so long dimly groping and agonizing for; and then I resolved to devote my life to carrying that light to my darkened fellow-creatures, which had been like a new birth to me. I am so full of sorrow for them, and I feel so sure that there is but one way to reach them, and that is through Him who said: 'I have the words of everlasting life.'"

"But who are you, who think and speak so rightly? Surely your origin is not from among these poor degraded creatures, whom you are so desirous to help. Your very features and voice are different from anything I ever met with among those classes, and I have seen a good deal of them."

"Do you think so? Many have thought so. It is the usual remark I hear from strangers. The very brothers of my tribe, indeed, though they love me, look upon me as not one of theirs. I know not whence I am,

but I have confused pictures—which, indistinct as they are, never fade away—of another life and other scenes in my earliest childhood. They used to try to persuade me that I came from fairy-land. The delusion is past, but the pictures remain the same."

The heart of Hernana now began to beat fast.

"And from what part of England do you come?" she said. "And can you tell where these scenes of childhood, which you remember in this confused manner, took place?"

"How should I? I have been a wanderer and a vagabond upon the face of the earth ever since I can distinctly remember, and yet I never recollect the time when I did not feel persuaded that I was born for other things than to travel about among gipsy boys."

"And you cannot recollect anything connected with the place of your birth, with the circumstances of your infancy?"

"It seems to me that I dream of lofty rooms, all shining with mirrors and gilding,

and of a sweet woman's face bending down to kiss me as I sit upon her knee."

"Should you know that woman's face again, if you saw it?"

"Yes, I should; but I shall never see it. Time must have changed it, if death have spared it. Time has changed me."

"Too true," she said, and she sighed. And then she turned and looked steadfastly at that beautiful face, and fancied she could trace faint lines of resemblance. But they were faint; he was most like his father, whom she had never seen.

They were now approaching the paved streets. Hernana stopped; she had, with her usual promptness, laid out a plan, and resolved upon its immediate execution.

"I have something to propose to you," she said. "My father was speaking but the other day of endeavouring to engage a Scripture reader, to make up in some degree for his own sad and forced inefficiency. Either you or your friend, perhaps, might not dislike the office. You,

I should be very glad to present to him; I think you are just what he is in search of."

"My call is not to one place or another place," he said. "I am a wanderer, bred if not born. My call is to walk among my poor lost brothers, here and there, and in no fixed place; wherever I can hope to do good, there I must be. I thank you for thinking of me."

"But it is not necessary," she answered, "that you should be absolutely tied to a place. Only promise me to think of it, and in the meantime, perhaps, you will come up and see my father; it would be well you should meet. He might, at all events, put you in the way to enlarge your sphere of usefulness in this place; and then, he is such a man, you would feel privileged to be brought into communication with him, so pious, so good, so truly benevolent and Christian a pastor; alas! poor man."

"I shall be happy, most happy, to be pre-

sented to him, if he is as you say. The good are very many. I am to your class a mere homeless outcast. My brothers are not there; but, thank you, I will come."

There was a strange sort of formality in his way of speaking. It had all the simplicity, however, if not the ease, of the higher classes; and this gentle gravity at his age was singular as it was winning.

It was arranged that he should call upon Mr. Lovel the next morning.

The two men accompanied her to the little iron gate. She bade them good night, and let herself in.

It was the next day, in the evening, that Hernana saw Charlie again.

She had expected him all the morning, but he had not made his appearance. About five o'clock in the afternoon the little gate opened, and with much agitation in his countenance, he was seen coming up the garden-walk.

He knocked at the house door. Hernana came herself to open it. She had been waiting for him the whole day with the greatest anxiety and impatience, reading Lady Aylmer's letters over and over again; and as she read her descriptions, she became the more and more convinced that this young man and the missing one were the same.

"You are come," she said, "rather late, but my father will be glad to see you."

"I am indeed very late, but I have been in much distress since I left your door last night. The one dearest to me upon earth, who has been to me more, if possible, than a mother, now lies to all appearance dying. She is in a strange state, both of body and mind, and there is no one to help her. I think she wants a woman's help — a lady's help — who could minister to both body and mind, which are both in sore travail. Will you come? Forgive my boldness; but I thought I saw that about you last night which encourages those in distress to call upon you. Will you come?"

These words were poured forth with a simple beseeching earnestness. It seemed as if the pleader was still so new to life, as to trust in perfect faith to his own favourable impressions; and to believe that to the good, it was only necessary to utter the cry for assistance to find relief.

Hernana was perhaps a little overmuch of the same confiding temper. In this instance, however, her impressions did not deceive her.

She looked at the young man's pleading face, the pure and simple, not to say noble, character of its expression. She remembered how she had seen him employed the night before, and it was impossible for her to refuse his prayer.

"Yes, I will go with you readily, if I can be of any use; but tell me how it goes with the poor woman. Perhaps I may be able to take something with me that will relieve her."

"I fear there is little to be done. For years she has been slowly wasting away, under the torment of some oppressive secret—I fear, the secret of some grievous wrong committed—nay,

I sometimes fear, crime. Her cheek has grown thinner and thinner, and the crimson spot upon it more bright and fiery; her eyes more anxious and more haggard, day by day. Still, she has followed me and my friend about, upon all our various pilgrimages, in spite of all we could say to persuade her to be at rest. Of late, she has been more than usually earnest with us to travel in this direction; but as we approached the part of the country, she became more and more restless and agitated. Last night she was suddenly taken much worse. She is at times, I think, almost delirious. She raves of some lady that she ought to see. I find it difficult to know what to do for her. This morning, it struck me that you, perhaps, would be so kind as to visit her, and try to soothe her, as you did the poor suffering creature last night."

"I will come and do what I can, willingly —what I can. Step in for a moment, whilst I put on my things; I will be as quick as possible."

He entered the little sitting-room, which was empty, and stood there, waiting till she was ready. She soon joined him, in her walking bonnet and cloak; which bonnet, simple as it was, set off to advantage the face beneath it, now beaming with kindness. A finer young creature can scarcely be seen, than she at that moment looked.

The young man fixed his eyes upon her in a sort of wondering admiration. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life that the power of female charm had been presented to him. He looked, turned away his head, and sighed; and then, without speaking, led the way to the door.

As they walked rapidly onwards together, and she resumed the conversation of the evening before with her usual animation, he answered less easily; his words seemed to come from him with difficulty, as if thinking of something else; and once or twice he sighed.

At last they approached the lowly mansion, in which he and his companion, with the

wretched Hesther, had taken up their lodging. It was a small dwelling, upon the outskirts of the town, standing alone, and looking out upon another side of the same heath I have described before. The appearance of the place was decent, though very humble: the two missionaries being careful to choose themselves respectable lodgings wherever they rested.

"I am glad you are come back," said a nice-looking old woman who opened the door, "for she is mortal bad, and at times seems as if she was losing speech altogether. Then she rallies again, starts up in her bed, and calls for you—and says you must come, or it will be too late. Oh! I am glad you have been and brought Miss Lovel. But how came you to think of Miss Lovel? Bless you, Ma'am, if any one can do the poor soul good, it is you."

"Will you come this way," said Charlie, "up these stairs?"

And he led the way up the narrow winding stairs which led to the door of Hesther's room. It was an old door of thin planks, ill-

fitting both above and below, and through it the sounds of deep and heavy groanings might be heard.

"It is not the body so much as the spirit that is striving with the mortal agony," said Charlie. "Oh! speak some words of woman's peace to the broken heart of woman."

He opened the door gently. Upon a low truckle bed Hesther was lying; her dress little different from that which she wore in the day, but she was half-covered with the coarse sheet and counterpane. Her long black hair had fallen round her shoulders, and lay in heavy dark masses, slightly silvered with grey. Her face—as half-raised in her bed there she sat, her thin, veiny hands tightly clenched, and resting upon her knee, and her dark black eyes staring forward—with its thin, sharp features, was working with agony.

Every now and then she wrung her hands, between anguish and impatience; at other times they would sink powerless before her, and she would utter a low and piteous groan.

"Charlie! Charlie!" she almost screamed as the door opened, "is it you? Oh, where have you been?—where have you been? I thought you would never come again! I thought before the terrible dark hour of death, an hour darker and more terrible had come—the hour that would take you away from me!"

"Did you think I ever would forsake you, mammy?" said he, with a smile of the kindest affection; "*that* was a foolish trouble; for you know it is what I never, never will do."

"Never! never!—ah! but you do not know. The hour *will* come, it is come!" with a wild and piteous cry, "the hour when you will curse and abhor poor Hesther."

"Never—never—never."

"Oh! you do not know. But who is that? Who is that fair creature, with the Romany blood mantling in her brown cheek. I know well who she is; her name is Lovel, a friend of the poor and helpless she is; but why do you bring her to me?"

"Because," said Hernana, coming up to the

bedside, "he thought I might be able to comfort you."

Hesther shook her head.

"No one can comfort me, there is no one can comfort Hesther. There is that lying upon Hesther's heart, which hand on earth cannot remove."

"But, mammy, mother, it is never too late. There is another hand, a mightier, and more merciful, than any earthly hand. He can do it!"

"I have told you," she said, with a darkening look, "that it was of no use talking to me in this way. That, which you see, I cannot see that which you feel, I cannot feel. Where to you there is light, to me it is all darkness; where you find comfort, I find nought but misery, misery, misery, misery."

"Speak to her—speak to her, lady," cried Charlie, in bitter distress at these words. "Speak to her; you are wise, and instructed, and eloquent. I am a poor, ignorant boy—speak to her; oh! find some comfort for

her soul. For the love of God, speak to her!"

"The God you cannot see," said the young girl, in a tender, feeling voice, laying her hand upon the clenched hands of the woman. "The God you cannot see, is not the less real, the less near, because you cannot perceive Him. *His* eye is upon you, though you see it not. His tender mercies encircle you, though you know it not."

"Ah! ah! Is it so? But how am I to be assured of it? No, no, no—and if He does live—if His eye be upon me, will that comfort me, think you, when I know the black and hideous heart that lies within this breast? He reads the heart, does He not? at least, so all these preachers say."

"Yes; most sure, He reads the heart."

"Then, what have you to do? To persuade me to take comfort? He hates crime, murder and robbery, deceit and wrong. Murder the worst! of the aged and helpless. Robbery the worst! of a woman's own child. Deceit! the

long deceit of sixteen years; and wrong! and angel wronged."

"Yes," said Hernana, "most sure, the God of righteousness abhors crime, and those you speak of are fearful crimes. If you have committed such, it is indeed an awful thing; yet it is never too late. There is remission and pardon for the darkest criminal if—"

"If what?" fixing her eyes earnestly upon her face.

"If he repent, truly repent, and make restitution and reparation, such as lies in his power, before it is too late."

"Ay! ay! ay! I knew it would be so. Your God only comes to me to tear my heart in two—to force my treasure, my life's treasure from me! Yes, yes; He is merciful and good. You say so. And He will take thee *from* me!" she cried passionately, looking at Charlie, and stretching her arms convulsively towards him.

Hernana paused — gazed — conviction was strengthening within.

"Yes," she said with authority; "He *will*, for He *is* good and merciful, and it is time that the *real* mother's tears should be dried, and the wronged one restored to his own."

Hesther answered by a wildering shriek.

"Who are you? who are you?" she cried. "Then you know! you know! But—" and all the wily acuteness of the gipsy came into her eyes as she said it, "But if you know, what is the use of my telling you, I wonder?"

"Because, to do right at last is what you must do, whether I know or not; because to confess the truth is the only way to find peace for your soul, and the time is short, for you are about to die."

"Ah! if I were but sure of that! But this it is, lady!" griping her hand between her burning fingers, and looking earnestly up into Hernana's eyes; "this it is: I *cannot* part with him before I die! Do you think this is the first time? Oh, no! How I have wrestled with myself; how I have been torn and divided when I looked at him! Look at

him now, as there he stands, with those heaven-blue eyes fixed upon me! My darling! my angel!"—as, with a countenance full of feeling and affection, he knelt down by the side of the pallet, and pressed his face against the mattress upon which she lay. "My darling! my angel!" and she fondly laid her skinny hand upon his beautiful hair. "How could I wrong thee? Yet how could I part with thee? Thou oughtest to have been a lord in thy grand castle among the mountains! But what would have become of Hesther? There is no place in grand castles for Hesther!"

"It is, then, as I thought!" cried Hernana, vehemently. "Oh! Lady Aylmer!"

"Aylmer!" cried Hesther, suddenly turning to her. "Aylmer! Who told you it was Aylmer?"

"It is! it is, then!" almost sobbed Hernana. "Oh! my friend! Oh! Lady Aylmer!"

The young man rose up from the bedside.

"What is all this about? What is the meaning of all this?"

Hernana could not speak. She held out her hand to him.

"What is this? what is it all?" he kept ejaculating.

"The lost is found! The lost is found at last!" burst forth from Hernana. "You are the long-lost Claribert, Lord Aylmer!"

"Perhaps," he said, gravely drawing forth from her bosom the little sack in which the glove was enclosed, and tearing it open—"perhaps this may throw some light!"

"The very glove!" she shrieked rather than said. "You are—you are the long-lost child! Oh! my friend! my dear Lady Aylmer!"

Hesther all this time kept gazing upon her, as if almost stupified. At last she slowly sank back upon her pillow, like one utterly exhausted.

"Yes!" she said; "take him away! take the young lord away! for he it is! he it is! He is the lost child of the Dana Ford!"

"She is dying! she is dying!" cried Hernana, whose presence of mind rarely for-

sook her. "We must have her deposition! Send for a magistrate! send for a magistrate!" She ran to the top of the stairs; she screamed to the woman of the house; she called for a magistrate; then for pen, ink, and paper.

"I will take it down myself!" she said; "and you shall listen to it, and swear to it!"

An old scrap of dirty paper, written upon with a pen and ink borrowed a few doors off, received the dying confession of Hesther. One or two decent people in the neighbourhood were hastily summoned in, to listen to and swear to it.

Whilst Hernana was thus busily employed, hurrying forward the preparation of this document so precious, how was he, the most interested in this scene, occupied? With what feelings did he receive the astounding discovery that he, the outcast, beggar, and gipsy, was a noble in this noble land—he, the poor, needy wanderer, lord of a sumptuous castle and mighty possessions?

He was upon the opposite side of the bed,

his arm tenderly supporting the pillow of the dying woman, with one hand so gently wiping the death-dew from her brow, and stooping down, from time to time, to kiss that haggard face as he hung over it.

Her closing eyes opened, she looked up at that face so dear, so true, still so full of affection, and then the agonized and desperate gaze softened.

"He does not go away. You love your poor mammy, do you? Still, still—thank your God then, for He *is* merciful, and He has healed my heart at last!"

She then, as far as her strength would permit, in broken accents, and with her eyes fixed upon that face so passionately loved, made a full confession of the events of the fatal night, and of the murder at the ford; and pointing to a small bundle which she always carried with her, said it contained the clothes which the child at that time wore. These, united with the glove she had hung round his neck, seemed to complete the chain of evidence. After she had

made her confession, the gipsy-woman seemed relieved and somewhat better.

"You will get better yet, mammy," said Charlie cheerfully.

"And live to see you righted? No, no! Do you see," as a white pigeon fluttered up to the window, "that is the messenger to fetch my soul away. Kiss me, Charlie, kiss poor Hesther, Lord Aylmer. Oh! it is merciful to let me die, before his real mother has him!"

These were her last words.

Bedewed with the abundant tears of him she had so wronged and loved, without making confession of another crime which weighed lightly upon her conscience in comparison with the wrong done to Charlie, her spirit quietly passed away, and went to that world, where justice tempered by mercy, allots the portion of each, according to their lights and their opportunities.

He rose from the side of the pallet over which he had wept and watched, and reverently closed her eyes.

Then he looked up, and around him, but he was already an altered man.

He was himself.

That strange contradiction he had always felt within, between his instincts and the circumstances which surrounded him, and that had made his life appear like some wizard dream, from which he was ever upon the point of awakening, had ended. He had awakened, and he was at once restored and at one with himself.

Strange, but true—the impressions of early infancy, the strong sympathies of blood, the something impressed upon the individual man as his birthright—not all the habits and influences of sixteen years could efface. They had always by the intuitive sense been received as something alien and strange; but now he felt restored to his native element.

He looked upon Hernana with a momentary

hesitation, which he speedily conquered, and going up to her, took her hand, and thanked her most warmly for what she had done.

Not the slightest doubt seems to have perplexed him as to his really being the lost heir of Castle Avon, nor the least apprehension as to the capability of proving that the truth, of which he felt as much convinced as if it had been revealed to him.

With the utmost simplicity he assumed the position to which he was born—a simplicity, be it said, which never forsook him. Such as he was at that moment, such he remained. The shepherd-lord celebrated by Wordsworth, was a being akin to him. Then he said:

"And my mother? my real mother? Alas! poor mother, I remember her. I think I could almost know her again, and the room where I sat upon her knee, and her smile. Alas! poor mother. That memory always haunted me, and I loved it still better than you, my poor mammy."

"She lives. She had got upon your trace,

and is now searching you over the United Kingdom. Poor, bereaved mother! to have you restored at last!"

Expresses were dispatched on many sides, and before long the mother was restored to her son.

To doubt of his identity when thus discovered was impossible. His likeness to his father, the late Lord Aylmer, was so striking, that it must have been remarked by the most casual observer.

The little glove; the clothes marked with his own initials in tiny letters, and easily to be recognised; his own recollections — the chain of evidence was perfect, and the mother and son were clasped in each other's arms in full security.

They seemed, indeed, to recollect each other. He had still a look of what he had been as a child, and she yet bore traces of that face which

had bent over and kissed him as he sat upon her lap — that face which had haunted his waking dreams for so many years.

Last of all in the chain of evidence, came the extraordinary revelation of the deceit practised by Mr. Gorhambury and his agent, of which the unhappy stranger had been the instrument.

As it was necessary to obtain every tittle of evidence before the formal claim of restitution of Lord Aylmer's rights could be made, this most painful circumstance could not be concealed.

My tale draws to a close. I need not dwell upon the law proceedings which ensued; enough, Mr. Gorhambury was cast, and the young Lord Aylmer, after his restoration, becoming, as being under age, and the will destroyed, a ward of Chancery, no indulgence could be shown as respected the accumulation of rents received and spent during the fourteen years of wrongful possession; more especially when the means were made public, by which that possession had been obtained.

Mr. Gorhambury, it is needless to say, was completely ruined. How his proud, hard, and bitter spirit endured this sudden reverse of fortune, may be understood by those who have observed how little real fortitude is shown by the ungentle, under the sharp visitations of life; how little real strength there is in what is only *hard;* how little real courage in what is rough; how little real patience in what is unfeeling. He was, however, proud in the midst of his sufferings, and obstinately refused the assistance Lord Aylmer was impatient to offer him.

He did not live long to need it. One secret, yet undivulged, was rankling still at his heart; one other heinous action, and which might—he trembled at the idea—be discovered too. This secret, probably, it was which continued to prey upon his spirits, even after he had a little rallied from the effects of his terrible overthrow.

I know not, and I little care. He did not live to suffer long. Suffering would not have

amended him. He became more morose, unamiable and unfeeling than ever. It was impossible to sympathise with—almost to pity him.

One day he was found dead in his bed. No inquiries were made; and if he added another to his catalogue of erring deeds, it—like the one recovering the will—escaped discovery in this world. He was carried to his grave unregretted. Nay, the world seemed all the better and lighter because he was taken out of it.

At his death Mrs. Gorhambury came into possession of a small income from her settlement. She, like her husband, refusing the assistance most liberally offered.

And how did Philip take it? The spoiled child of fortune! was he the better for the reverse? And how did that poor little trifler, he was so unkind to, bear this sudden fall from affluence the most unbounded, to narrow circumstances?

She bore it like a woman with a heart—like

a woman, a dear true woman, who cares for nothing in this world, so that it does not touch her affections. She showed herself in the hour of adversity in her true colours, and of her true value. She was courageous, cheerful, affectionate, and loving, to everybody; most of all to him she loved so dearly, in spite of all his unhappiness. And he?

Yes, he had not a bad heart; he was only a spoiled, pampered child of luxury, and vanity, and pride. He suffered dreadfully, not so much from the loss of position and fortune —though to that far from indifferent—as from the distressing and mortifying discoveries that were made public.

He could not bear to show his face in society after what had happened. He resolved to expatriate himself, and got a place in one of the colonies. And there she cheerfully followed him.

She was so loving, so cheering, so good-humoured, so happy, in being only allowed to devote herself to him. True woman! Heart of man could not resist it.

He had a heart, and he had good abilities, all running to ruin; but this check saved him.

Philip Gorhambury became a valuable man, and poor little Maria as happy as woman could be. He made a fortune in the colony where he settled, and had, as I have heard, twelve children.

And Claribert, Lord Aylmer, how did he support the more difficult transition which he was called to?

Like that Clifford, named the Shepherd Lord:

"Who, long compelled in humble walks to go,
Was softened into feeling, soothed and tamed.

"Love he had found in huts where poor men lie;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills;
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

"Nor did he change, but kept, in lofty place,
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

"Glad were the vales and every cottage hearth;
The Shepherd Lord was honoured more and more;
And ages after he was laid in earth,
'The good Lord Clifford' was the name he bore."

And so it was with the Gipsy Lord.

There are some characters, to use a quaint old illustration, which, like the bee, suck honey from every flower; to which every event of life, brings its accession of wisdom, or kind feeling; who know how to profit by each experience, and to increase the treasure of indulgence and pity by all the errors and unhappiness they see around them.

I may, perhaps, be thought to deal with romances, but I assure my readers that real life has furnished examples, rare, I allow, of the most extraordinary excellence and beauty of character developed under circumstances quite as unfavourable as those of Claribert, Lord Aylmer.

He was not, however, a monster of perfec-

tions. He did not come out with all the polish and elegance of manner which he would probably have acquired under the early tutelage of the great world; but the perfect simplicity of his character, the noble freedom from pride or vanity, and their degrading shape of false shame, the dignity of his aims, and the generous benevolence of his heart, were sufficient to mark him as one singular only in excellence and virtue.

Still he never learned to love the great world. His heart clung with a fond solicitude to those among whom he had been reared. Their good their improvement, was the object of his life. He knew no interest to be compared to that of endeavouring to spread light in their deep darkness, and to purify their foul, foul stream of life.

To lift these beings—created little lower than the angels, yet sunk to grovel below the brutes —to their high inheritance, by opening to them that one grand prospect of the infinite and eternal life for which they were born, and

bringing them into communion with that Being who forsook the realms of everlasting day, and made Himself a home of darksome clay, to preach the Gospel to the poor; seating Himself at table with publicans and sinners; and calling not the righteous but sinners to repentance. This was his great aim, and this he did in a spirit in which I wish it always were done—of warm, glowing love. His teachings were like those of the beautiful creation around Him; fresh as the blithe air, warm and genial as the sunbeam, beautiful as the glorious star-constellations, and tender as the budding flower.

He knew how to call to life, all that was imaginative, loving, engaging, in the humane heart. He loved to see these poor creatures happier, as well as better, and whilst he strove to withdraw them from the criminal excitements of their miserable lives, to substitute what would be full of a truer enjoyment.

Thus his life was passed away, in what was a singular and original course of his own. At

his time it was thought *most* singular. Thank God, it would not be so esteemed now.

Hernana was at least three, perhaps four years older than he was, but that did not prevent the growth of an attachment to which a peculiar sympathy in their characters and ways of thinking gave birth. In due time they married and were *very* happy.

They ventured upon an experiment, which, to many people, I am sorry to say, would have been a dangerous one—they took their parents to dwell with them, under the same roof.

It is, indeed, a disgrace to human nature, that this cannot more often, with prudence, be done.

Lady Aylmer, still young, and restored, as it were, to a fresh existence by the presence of her son, shared in his interests and occupations, and was rewarded for her long years of sorrow by his strong and partial attachment; an attachment of which his young wife was never jealous.

Mr. Lovel retired with them to Castle Avon, where he assumed the post of chaplain. and found abundance of employment for all the little bodily strength which illness had left him.

And so farewell to them and you.

THE END.

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